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Marxism Today

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

JOHN GOLLAN

THE MOSCOW CONFERENCE

JACK HENDY

TRADE UNIONS AND THE CHALLENGE
OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY

JOHN HOSTETTLER

BOURGEOIS FREEDOM AND RENTS

LIONEL MUNBY

THE TWO-PARTY SYSTEM IN BRITAIN

DISCUSSION:

RALPH RUSSELL

ON HOW NEW IS THE "NEW LEFT"?

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CONTENTS

	page
Editorial Comments	1
John GOLLAN The Moscow Conference	5
The significance of the Conference and decisions of the meeting of the eighty-one Communist Parties	
Jack HENDY Trade Unions and the Challenge of Modern Technology	12
Discusses new problems that confront the working class in the light of modern technical developments.	
John HOSTETTLER Bourgeois Freedom and Rents	18
The real nature and limitations of bourgeois freedom revealed through the issue of and struggles around rents.	
Lionel MUNBY The Two-Party System in Britain	24
Historical background and significance of the British two-Party system.	
DISCUSSION: Ralph RUSSELL On How New is the "New Left"?	29

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Editorial Comments

ANYONE who a few years ago had prophesied that the dollar would be a less-desirable currency than the pound, the West German mark or the franc would have been, quite rightly, regarded as slightly crazy, for the dollar was so obviously at the very centre of all international finance. Yet today there is a flight from the dollar, some of which has been promoted by years of dollar devaluation.

Everyone offers different reasons for this quite unexpected change. Similar factors are put forward by almost everyone, but there are different estimations of their relative importance. In our view the main factors are (1) the recession inside the United States; (2) the deliberate refusal by the West German monopolists, bent on speedy aggrandisement, to apply the normal capitalist "rules of the game"; and (3) the facilities that the restoration of the international capitalist financial system, on the basis of convertibility, are offering to those who are expert in the buying and selling of currencies.

History shows itself in all its irony in the conduct of the West German monopolists, who are behaving in exactly the same way as those of the United States between the wars. The United States, before the war, threw a spanner into the international monetary mechanism, to the detriment of all other capitalist countries. Now the West German spanner is thrown in to the detriment of the United States.

The enormous mass unemployment in Western Germany, in the immediate post-war years, enabled the West German monopolists to depress wages and to intensify speed-up to a greater extent than in other European countries. Despite some recent advances by the workers, labour costs in West Germany remain low compared with those of their neighbours. As a consequence West Germany has been able enormously to expand its exports, whilst holding down the consumption of the German people.

Thus a very large balance of payments surplus has been built up. Rejecting the policy of increased wages and pursuing a very cautious policy of capital exports, the German monopolists have used that surplus to build up their currency reserves.

If a country exports to an increasing extent, without a corresponding increase in imports or in foreign trading, it unbalances other capitalist countries and drains away from them their foreign currencies or gold. Thus the great "unbalancer" is being unbalanced, and the "drainer" *par excellence* is being drained.

Though United States foreign trade is improving, its gross national product—owing to a fall in home demand—is falling. About 6½ per cent of its labour force is unemployed. Unemployment, therefore, is now around the 4 million mark, and is expected to increase to between 5½ and 6 million this year.

Once More Recession

The government and the monetary authorities in the U.S.A. are keeping interest low in order to stimulate the economy. This, however, has the effect of encouraging financial speculators to shift their money from the United States to Western Germany and other European countries (including Britain) where high interest rates are now in vogue. In the not-so-long run this leads to the United States Treasury losing gold and a growing lack of confidence in the dollar.

In theory, the United States Government could say "domestic recovery first; we will keep interest rates low to stimulate it, and if the speculators and the 'get-rich-quick' gangs interfere, we will restrict them by exchange controls". This would, however, be a sharp reversal of United States' financial policy since the war, the aim of which has been to drag all capitalist countries willy-nilly into a system of international convertibility.

Many other ways of escape are open to the United States, but all of them would adversely affect America's main capitalist allies. It is being suggested, for instance, that these should make a contribution to the support of American forces in Europe; or, again, that they should lower their interest rates and their tariffs on U.S. goods; or, allow the United States to raise *its* tariffs.

We, from our side, would suggest another alternative. *Let the United States remove all its troops and bases from Europe.* The saving would be immediate and beneficial.

This, however, would require an even greater change of U.S. policy than that concerning convertibility. No doubt, by the time this note appears, some measures will be adopted, but the long-term implications of the situation are extremely interesting. It has been tacitly assumed, both in the Labour and Tory Parties, that the problem of maintaining full employment has, once and for all, been solved. The state, we have been told again and again, has at its disposal a wide variety of economic devices, and, if mass unemployment or inflation threatens, it has simply to use the appropriate device, and the evil threatening the economy will speedily vanish.

Yet we have seen the strongest capitalist state in the world losing gold on a massive scale, because it is keeping interest rates low, as an anti-recession measure. In contrast, Britain, which ought to be reducing interest rates and relaxing hire-purchase controls, is afraid to do so, lest the "hot money" which has come to this country in recent months should abruptly depart again.

In the 1930's conflicts of interest between the various capitalist states made agreements on economic policy exceedingly difficult. A similar situation is now emerging, and the right-wing conception, that full employment is here to stay, will get some hard knocks, as the conflicts between monopoly capitalist states develop, and the fragility, unreliability and, in many cases, inapplicability of the so-called stabilisation devices become more clear.

Communism and the Family

The October issue of *Marxism Today* carried an interesting article on "Communism and the Family" which helped, perhaps, to refute some of the more fantastic propaganda (which has been so hardy and annual, for so many years) that socialism militates against marriage and undermines the family.

Some additional interesting information from an interesting source has been published in the November issue of the London Marriage Guidance Bulletin—*Marriage Guidance*. In this, Professor Mace, M.A., B.Sc., Ph.D., reports on a four-and-a-half-week car journey covering 3,500 miles through the Soviet Union. His purpose was to make a study of family life in the Soviet Union, and, since he wanted to get close enough to Soviet families to see how they lived, he spent most of his time in the tourist camping sites recently opened by the government and where large numbers of Soviet families spend their holidays. Apart from this individual contact he met authorities in this field and was given, he says, every assistance:

"We had magnificent help from representatives of the Committee of Soviet Women in the communities we visited; and from the Editorial staff of the magazine *Soviet Woman*. With ready co-operation we were able to do everything we wished, aided by the cultured English-speaking interpreters . . . we spent days in divorce courts hearing cases and afterwards discussing them with the judges. We met all kinds of authorities and plied them with questions for hours on end—to which they responded with great patience and unflinching courtesy."

Professor Mace had many surprises, not the least of which was to discover that, "the Russians be-

lieve in love and romance and choose their marriage partners on this basis". He found no difficulty in understanding the idea that environment is all important in a socialist society and has a bearing on everything. He makes the point that the "Soviets practise their beliefs in the most thorough manner, and that results, up to a point, are impressive."

Soviet families, particularly, impressed him very much, as did the comradeship between husband and wife. He liked the balance between loyalty to the family and the community. Of Soviet children he says, "alert, friendly, neither over-boisterous nor over-obsequious in their relations with adults, remarkably free from quarrels in their co-operation with one another." He also liked "the clean living in a country completely devoid of the artificially-contrived sexual stimulation with which our culture is becoming saturated."

He did not like the Registry Office marriage ceremony as he thought it lacking in dignity, but was impressed by the new "wedding palaces" recently opened in Leningrad and Kiev, which he visited. Wedding palace ceremonies with all relatives present and champagne toasts are, he says, making a dramatic comeback.

With regard to housing in Britain, many marriages break up because of bad housing conditions, living with relatives, sharing domestic offices, etc., and the constant strain this way of living imposes on marriages old and new. This, says the professor, has had its effect in the Soviet Union, too. But, he adds, "the present vast and impressive housing project throughout the entire country is rapidly removing this blot on the Soviet escutcheon." The professor talks about the Soviet attitude to divorce and says there is a strong public feeling against this, and that the only ground for it is proof that marriage is irreparably broken. He was convinced, however, that anyone really determined to get a divorce, could do so, and concludes that "in principle, I consider this [the Soviet divorce system] a far better system than ours."

On two things the professor was critical. He regrets the absence of what he calls "marriage counselling". And he was startled to find himself "in a society where Freudian concepts have been totally rejected". His *Report on Soviet Marriage* is most interesting and shows a real effort to study the problem with an open mind.

Cleopatra and Kindred Problems

The state of Miss Elizabeth Taylor's teeth may appear a far cry from Marxism. We are not inhuman, and wish her a speedy return to health

for her own sake and for those of the many film workers in British studios whose jobs are jeopardised through Miss Taylor being unable to continue filming in the name part in *Cleopatra*. This done, we must ignore her teeth and look a little deeper at some of the questions that lie in the wake of this publicity attracting film. Twentieth Century-Fox chief, Syros P. Skouras, made a broad hint, when, on his departure for the United States, he was asked what would happen about continuing with the filming. "There are so many factors involved," he is reported in the daily *Cinema* (25.11.60) as having replied, "that we are unable to do so yet. But in any circumstances, the picture will continue somewhere somehow." This is not just the evasive sort of statement it appears, for it indicates that the president of Twentieth Century-Fox thinks of film-making in world-wide terms, studios of Europe being especially attractive to Hollywood producers.

Owning a studio is expensive, especially in Hollywood, so the trend has been to hire studios when they are required. In Britain and the rest of Europe, anyway, they are cheaper, as are the salaries and wages paid to the technicians and craftsmen in the studios. These studio-workers are faced with a dilemma: despite their efforts in the political as well as the industrial field to stimulate British film-making, there is not much work around, particularly in the winter months, so should they take the work on the American-sponsored picture, or starve while upholding the principles of independence from further American domination of our screens? Then there is also the allied question of what their Hollywood brothers think about *their* not getting the work in their studios. Such have been the basic problems of making such mammoth-sized pictures as *Cleopatra* and *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* in Europe.

Why these king-sized pictures anyway? The cinema, as a viable industry, cannot now exist on a diet of small, intimate pictures alone—these are much more suitable for the medium of television entertainment. Bigger pictures on wider screen, running for longer periods, perhaps at higher admission charges, is now the pattern of cinema entertainment. The cost of production of such pictures is high, so the entertainment centre of Britain, London, with its nearby studios of sufficient size and of reasonable cost are attractive to American producers. British producers cannot easily raise the finance for such pictures, and as the National Film Finance Corporation is not particularly liked by the Tory Government—it represents an element of public control, and, anyway, was the darling of Harold Wilson—the

chances of a truly British film to stand comparison with an Anglo-American co-production are not so great.

In becoming the original centre of world film-making, Hollywood came to terms with the "foreigners" who brought their talents and their money, so the question is openly asked by many British film-workers—"Why shouldn't we do the same now?" If the thought appears at times to be unpatriotic, they reconcile themselves with the idea that welcoming the Hungarian, Alexander Korda, to Britain did not do anything but good. In the making of co-productions the national characteristics of both participating nationalities are important things that have to be preserved.

The Tolstoy Anniversary

The fiftieth anniversary of the death of Leo Tolstoy has been the occasion of tributes of a variety which the great writer himself would have enjoyed commenting on. The intellectual high-jinks offered by Sir Isaiah Berlin would certainly have confirmed his opinion of professional academics. *The Times Literary Supplement*, inspired by Sir Isaiah, allowed itself the statement: "No wonder his [Tolstoy's] contemporaries in Russia called him a 'nihilist'. Today, they would call him a 'counter-revolutionary'."

So far from calling him a counter-revolutionary contemporary Soviet opinion is generous in its recognition of Tolstoy's greatness. Both his houses—in Moscow and Yasnaya Polyana—are kept as national monuments and preserved with an affectionate mixture of care and informality very proper to a man whose grave beneath the beech trees is unmarked, save by a simple mound. The Tolstoy Museum in Moscow contains a wealth of biographical material, manuscripts and correspondence, including letters in English. An excellent documentary film of Tolstoy's life (some of which was shown on *Monitor*) has been made, so has a new film version of *Resurrection*. And the fiftieth anniversary in November was celebrated by an international conference of literary experts, as well as by a vast memorial meeting in the Bolshoi Theatre, attended by most of the leading figures in Soviet life and culture, including Mr. Khrushchov and Mme Ulanova.

At this great meeting, at which readings from the novels (Alla Tarasova giving the final pages of *Anna Karenina*) alternated with excerpts from the plays, given by the Moscow Arts Theatre, the principal address was given by Mr. Leonid Leonov, one of the most distinguished of Soviet novelists, with a notable tribute from Rockwell Kent, the American artist. On Sunday, November

20th, the front pages of *Pravda* and *Izvestia* carried articles on Tolstoy, as well as reports of the meeting. It must be the first time that a counter-revolutionary has been so honoured by Soviet society. Or can it be that *The Times Literary Supplement* is up the pole?

A New Quarterly

Any publication likely to tell us something of the cultural life of a socialist country is welcome. This is particularly true of the *New Hungarian Quarterly* which has recently arrived in this country. Published in English in Budapest, its production is of a remarkably high standard, typography and layout giving it a distinctive appearance. But it is the contents which make it particularly welcome. There are so many misconceptions about the Hungary of today, some of them deliberately fostered by the enemies of socialism, that the work of Hungarian writers, selected with the British public in mind, can bring considerable enlightenment. An article on *The Two Cultures* (by Jozsef Fekete) in the first issue links up with C. P. Snow's famous thesis and gives valuable information about the problems of education under socialism.

A feature of this and of other contributions, such as *Problems of Style and the New Public* (by László Bokai), is the note of self-criticism, which defines problems and illustrates the difficulties of finding solutions.

The editors intend to present short stories, extracts from novels and plays, lyric poetry, reproductions from the field of fine arts (this issue contains a number of excellent plates of the work of Béni Ferenczy), with articles on music carrying musical illustrations where necessary. They believe that this will be the "best medium for obtaining a picture of the Hungarian realities of today and for studying Hungary's past". This is an exciting project, and one which, if carried out at the standard of the first issue, should not fail to underline the "common objective of people of good will everywhere".

Alan Bush's "Men of Blackmoor"

The long effort to compose genuinely English music was vividly and lucidly described in an interview between Alan Bush and Colin Mason in *The Guardian* on December 1st. How thoroughly it disposes of the canard that the Communist composers write "as they are told!" Bush points out that when he left the Royal Academy after four

years, he was unaware "even of the existence, let alone the language, of English folk song". Soon after, he had begun to want to write "English" music. Melodically, this happened fairly soon; but harmony needed another twenty years of work.

English composers are at a disadvantage, he points out, compared with German; for in both countries they are brought up to hear mainly German music.

As with Shostakovich, we gain an impression of a fine and independent mind, listening carefully to what his political comrades have to say, but solving his own musical problems for himself.

The interview appeared on the day of the first British performance of *Men of Blackmoor*, Bush's second opera. This was done by the University Opera Club at Oxford. In spite of the difficulty of the work for amateur performers, and serious inadequacy in one or two of the soloists, it was enough to show its splendid qualities. A straightforward tale of a strike in a Northumbrian mining village in the 1820's, written by Nancy Bush, the music is based on Northumbrian folk song. The choral writing is intensely stirring, and a large orchestra plays its full part in the drama and in the important development of character.

The reaction of most of the critics was significant, if only too true to type. Such a theme is incorrect for opera ("impeccable by Marxist standards" was how the Special Correspondent of *The Times* put it), so they did not listen to the music, as many of their comments showed.

Mr. Mason himself was an exception, giving a reasoned, if somewhat severe, estimate of the work. His most just remark, however, occurred in the preface to the interview:

"There is, arguably, a political element in the East German enthusiasm for his music, and also in any lack of enthusiasm at home. But though politics may keep a good opera off the stage, even in England, where artists' politics are not taken seriously, they will not keep a bad opera on the stage, even in the Wonderland of East Germany.

"The continuing success of Bush's operas there must be ascribed chiefly to the music, not to his political loyalties nor to his choice of subjects—though naturally these help."

The reception to the opera on the last night, when the hall was full for the first time, was very warm indeed. It must now receive a full professional performance and find its place in the repertory in Britain, as it has in the German Democratic Republic.

The Moscow Conference

(Extracts from a Report made by John Gollan to the Executive Committee of the Communist Party on December 12th, 1960.)

THE Moscow Conference of eighty-one Communist and Workers' Parties was probably the most momentous Conference in the history of the international Communist movement because of the issues discussed. These were the nature of our epoch, war and peace, coexistence, national liberation, the strategy of world advance to socialism, and the varied forms of transition to socialism. These are not academic, but vital issues, deciding the key questions of tactics and strategy of the mass struggle and general political line of our movement on a world scale.

The statement adopted unanimously by the Conference was a most significant and bold development of the Marxist-Leninist position, carrying forward the strategy of the world Communist movement for the next decade.

Why was this possible? This was due to the tremendous successes of the world Communist movement on the basis of the bold new perspectives opened up by the decisions of the Twentieth Congress of the C.P.S.U. and, subsequently, the 1957 Conference Declaration, the development of world events and the growth in numbers and political maturity and strength of the world Communist movement. As the 1957 Conference Declaration put it, the historic importance of the Twentieth Congress was that it "opened a new stage in the world Communist movement".

The 1957 Conference, the first International Communist Conference since the Comintern, was a decisive step. But then there were still some after-effects of the struggle to defeat revisionism, a struggle which greatly strengthened the Communist movement ideologically. The 1960 Conference was a new stage after three years of this great development of our world political position and tremendous world events. In 1957, sixty-four parties were represented; at the 1960 Conference eighty-one, and total membership had grown by 3 million. Today the world Communist movement is 36 million strong—a great and invincible force in world history. Looking round the hall we saw present leaders of powerful states, representatives of the great forces of communism in Asia, Latin America, the Arab countries, France and Italy. Who could doubt this?

Never has any international Communist gathering produced such important political reactions outside our ranks as this one. This is a fact of enormous significance. Without exaggeration our

decisions gave new hope to world humanity in averting thermo-nuclear war and in advancing democracy and socialism.

The Nature of our Epoch

The new Statement on the basis of the political experience and victories of the past three years carries the analysis on this vital issue, the starting point for any serious judgment on strategy and tactics, beyond that of the 1957 Declaration.

Certainly the 1957 Declaration said that the main content of our epoch was the transition from capitalism to socialism, that it was a period of developing socialism and declining capitalism. The world socialist system was growing and becoming stronger, it argued, and "is exerting ever greater influence upon the international situation in the interests of peace and progress and the freedom of the peoples".

The new Statement makes a detailed analysis of this period of transition, of struggle between the two opposing systems, of socialist revolutions and national liberation revolutions, a period of breakdown of imperialism, the abolition of the colonial system, transition of more peoples to the socialist path; of the triumph of socialism, communism on a world-wide scale and declares:

"It is the principal characteristic of our time that the world socialist system is becoming the decisive factor in the development of society."

It is the world socialist system and the forces fighting against imperialism for socialist transformation of society that now "determine the main content, main trend and main features of the historical development of society".

Lenin's prediction was that the countries of victorious socialism would influence the development of the world revolution, chiefly by their economic construction. This force of example has a tremendous effect on the workers in the capitalist countries, especially as the time is not far off when socialism will beat capitalism in the decisive sphere of human endeavour—material production. And in the capitalist countries the forces fighting for peace, national independence and the triumph of democracy, and the victory of socialism, are gaining in numbers and strength.

But what is the reality of the situation in the capitalist world, despite all the talk of the right-wing leaders about an "affluent" society, a crisis-free capitalism, and the need to "modernise" the

Labour Party by dropping any socialist aims and adopting a policy of managed capitalism at home, and N.A.T.O., the American alliance and the nuclear strategy abroad?

The world capitalist system is going through an intense process of disintegration and decay. There is the growth of monopoly, a sharpening of contradictions internally and externally, increasing instability, and the contrast of the productive forces and productive relations has never been greater. All this is particularly marked in the U.S. The ruling imperialist bourgeoisie in many countries can no longer resist on their own the growing forces of democracy and progress, and form military political alliances under U.S. leadership to fight in common against the socialist camp and the national liberation and working class and socialist movements.

But there are serious divisions in the capitalist alliances; they are opposed by great mass movements of the peoples. So the Statement reaches the important conclusion that *a new stage has begun in the general crisis of capitalism*:

"This is shown by the triumph of socialism in a large group of European and Asian countries embracing one-third of mankind; the powerful growth of the forces fighting for socialism throughout the world and the steady weakening of the imperialists' positions in the economic competition with socialism; the tremendous new upsurge of the national liberation struggle and the mounting disintegration of the colonial system; the sharpening contradictions of capitalism resulting from the growth of state monopoly capitalism and militarism; the increasing contradictions between monopolies and the interests of the nation as a whole; the curtailment of bourgeois democracy and the tendency to adopt autocratic and fascist methods of government, and a profound crisis in bourgeois politics and ideology."

The distinguishing feature of this new stage is that it is the result, not of world war, but arises in conditions of competition between the two systems, of the increasing change of the balance of forces in favour of socialism, when the struggle of the peace forces has prevented imperialism undermining world peace, and the struggle is growing for democracy, national liberation and socialism.

The peoples building socialism, the revolutionary movement of the working class in capitalist countries, the national liberation struggle, and the general democratic movement—these great forces of our time are *merging into one powerful current that undermines and destroys the world imperialist system*. The central factors of our day are the international working class and its chief creation, the world socialist system. It is on this

essential background that everything must be assessed.

The World Socialist System

Here is a section of the Statement that would repay the greatest study. There are no more socialist states in 1960 than there were in 1957. What are the new developments in this period which enabled the Conference to make the statement that now the world socialist system is becoming the decisive factor in our epoch? The points advanced are a rich and far-reaching assessment of the greatest importance.

There are three main points here:

First, that a new stage in its development has begun. The Soviet Union is carrying on the full-scale construction of communist society. The other countries of the socialist camp are successfully laying the foundations of socialism; some have already entered the period of construction of a developed socialist society. Together with the U.S.S.R. they form a mighty single socialist camp.

Second, the tremendous social and economic changes in the People's Democracies. Socialist relations of production prevail, the exploitation of man by man has been abolished or is being liquidated; there is industrialisation and co-operative farming on socialist lines, and the fraternal alliance of the workers and peasantry; the supreme principle of dictatorship of the proletariat is stronger than ever. This alliance is the political foundation of the socialist system. Historic changes in social structure have taken place, the landlords and capitalists have gone. A new socialist intelligentsia and an alliance of the working peoples of all nationalities has been formed. The moral and political unity of society which, for the first time in history, came into existence, and was firmly established in the U.S.S.R., is now growing in other socialist countries as well.

Today, the restoration of capitalism has been made socially and economically impossible, not only in the Soviet Union, but in other socialist countries, too. The combined forces of the socialist camp protect it from imperialism. Thus, the rallying of the socialist states in one camp, and their growing unity and strength, ensure victory for socialism in the entire system.

Third, the whole progress takes place on the basis of general objective laws. Mutual assistance and support, the advantages of unity and solidarity of the socialist countries, are the main international condition for the successes.

These laws, planned proportionate development of the economy, a voluntary system of international division of labour, mutual assistance, use of the highest technique, etc., can lead to the gradual

elimination of differences in levels of economic development in the socialist countries and provides a *material basis for a more or less simultaneous transition of the peoples of the Socialist system to communism*. They are necessary, too, for the historic task of surpassing the world capitalist system.

At the same time, however, the socialist camp is a community of free and sovereign peoples with common interests; they are equal and independent—their mutual relations are based on strict adherence to the principles of Marxism-Leninism and socialist internationalism. But all this needs conscious political work and the proper combination of the principles of socialist internationalism and socialist patriotism in politics—neither undue emphasis on national peculiarities nor the disregard of national peculiarities. The solidarity of the Communist Parties and the peoples of the Socialist countries, their loyalty to Marxism-Leninism, is the main source of the strength and invincibility of each socialist country and the whole camp.

Because the socialist states have now formed a world system they have become an international force exerting a powerful influence on world development.

As a result of all this, the Statement reaches the great and far-reaching conclusion:

“There are now real opportunities of solving problems of modern times in a new way, in the interests of peace, democracy and socialism.”

War and Peace

The most burning problem of our time, says the Statement, is that of war and peace. It carries the analysis of the 1957 Declaration to a higher stage.

The first section is a systematic exposure of imperialism; its responsibility for two world wars, how it is threatening a new catastrophe; that U.S. imperialism is the main force of aggression and war; imperialism is a grave danger to mankind. There is a detailed analysis of the blocs, the war plans, opposition to disarmament and the wrecking of the Summit—familiar to us all. Then comes *the first main argument*:

“The aggressive nature of imperialism has not changed. But real forces have appeared that are capable of foiling its plans of aggression. War is not fatally inevitable.”

What is the point here? Had the imperialists been able to do what they wanted we would have already have been plunged into the horrors of a new world war. But the time is past when the imperialists can decide at will whether or not there should be war. They have brought the

world to the brink with local wars—but they have been stopped by the peoples.

The time has come when the attempts of the imperialist aggressors to start world war can be curbed—world war can be prevented by the great and organised forces of our time.

What are these forces? The Soviet Union and the socialist camp; the growing number of peace-loving countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America; the international working class and its organisations, above all the Communist Parties; the national liberation movement; the world peace movement; the neutral countries who want peaceful co-existence.

This policy of peaceful co-existence is also favoured by a definite section of the bourgeoisie of the developed capitalist countries, which takes a sober view of the relation of forces and of the dire consequences of modern war.

Then comes *the second main point*: *The Statement is not concerned just to make generalisations, but, above all, to call for urgent action to carry the struggle for peace to a great new and victorious stage.*

It is a call for the broadest possible united front as there is no task more pressing than to *safeguard humanity from a global thermo-nuclear disaster*. This can't be put off, we must wage the struggle now, not when the H-bombs begin to fall. We must curb aggressors in good time and prevent war. All this requires the greatest vigilance, the exposure of the war-mongers, the rousing of the people, and the organisation of the peace forces and mass action for peace.

We want the broadest peace movement, uniting people of diverse political and religious creeds and classes, *united by the noble urge to prevent war.*

The responsibility to preserve peace rests first and foremost on the international working class. It must close its ranks—no political or religious creed should be an obstacle in countering the forces of war by joint action of all sections and organisations of the world working class. The Communist Parties regard the fight for peace as their main task. This is the key point of popular mass appeal adopted by the Conference.

This leads to the third main point: The foreign policy of the socialist countries is based on peaceful co-existence and economic competition of the two systems. In peace the socialist successes will grow, socialism will show its superiority over capitalism. The peace zone will expand. The working class movement in the capitalist countries and the national liberation movement will win new victories, the disintegration of the colonial system will be complete, the superiority

of the forces of peace and socialism will become absolute.

"In these conditions a real possibility will have arisen to exclude world war from the life of society even before socialism achieves complete victory on earth, with capitalism still existing in a part of the world. The victory of socialism all over the world will completely remove the social and material causes of all wars."

In a world divided into two social systems the only correct and reasonable principle of international relations is the Leninist principle of peaceful co-existence. It is the basis of the foreign policy of the socialist states.

Peaceful co-existence or destructive war—there is no other choice. This is the fourth main point.

Cold war brinkmanship is a policy leading to thermo-nuclear catastrophe. By upholding the principle of peaceful co-existence we fight for an end to the cold war, blocs and bases, with disarmament and negotiation. This meets the basic interests of the people, strengthens socialism, enhances the prestige of the socialist states and the Communist Parties in the capitalist states. Peace is a loyal ally of socialism, for time is working for socialism and against capitalism.

The policy of peaceful co-existence is a policy of mobilising the masses and mass action against the enemies of peace. It is not the renunciation of class struggle. Co-existence of states with different social systems is a form of class struggle between socialism and capitalism. It provides more favourable conditions for the development of the class struggle in the capitalist countries and for national liberation—in turn their successes promote peaceful co-existence.

Nor does it mean conciliation of socialist and bourgeois ideologies. It implies intensification of the struggle for socialist ideas—but we are against settling political and ideological disputes between states by war.

The historic importance of the Soviet proposal for complete and general disarmament, *is the fifth main point* made.

To realise this programme means to eliminate the very possibility of waging war. This is not easy—it encounters stubborn resistance from the imperialists. We have to wage persistent and increasing struggle. The aim is to win tangible, if partial, results, all paving the way for general disarmament. The task is to force the imperialists by the peace struggle into an agreement—to create a mass movement demanding that the money spent on war be used for civil needs. Disarmament has become a **fighting slogan of the masses**, a pressing historical necessity.

And so the conclusion is reached. Communists regard it as their historical mission not only to

abolish exploitation and rule out for all time the possibility of any kind of war in **human society**, but also to deliver mankind from the nightmare of a new world war already in our time. The Communist Parties will devote all their strength and energy to this great historical mission.

National Liberation

When discussing the great issues involved here one felt in the midst of a really great and dramatic moment in history. Present in the hall and speaking were leaders of the national liberation struggle, old and new, of almost legendary fame.

In fifteen years since 1945, forty new states have emerged in Asia and Africa. As the statement puts it, the:

"breakdown of the system of colonial slavery under the impact of the national liberation movement is a development ranking second in importance only to the formation of the world socialist system".

New and complicated questions are involved—the attitude to the national bourgeoisie, the completion of the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal democratic revolution, its further development in the direction of socialism. Do these new states necessarily take the road of capitalist development? The new forms of colonial exploitation developed by the imperialists. Can these states be won for a peace policy?

And, of course, the urgent questions of solidarity and support of the colonial struggle to end the subjection of the remaining colonies and protect, for example, Cuba, from intervention.

Here the enormous role of the world socialist system on all these issues—its economic and political help—places the national liberation struggle in an entirely new setting.

What are the main points of the Statement here? The peoples of the colonies are winning their independence, both by armed struggle and peaceful means. Headed by the U.S., the imperialists are making desperate efforts to preserve colonial exploitation in new forms, undermine the new states, emasculate their national sovereignty and draw them into the imperialist war blocs.

The national rebirth in the countries that have thrown off the colonial yoke can only be effective if accompanied by a determined struggle against imperialism and the remnants of feudalism by all patriotic forces united in a national democratic front. The general task here is to consolidate political independence, agrarian reform, end imperialist domination, restrict or force out the foreign monopolies, build a national industry, develop democratic life and an independent

peaceful foreign policy and relations with socialist states.

The role of the working class, the need for a solution to the peasant problem, and for a worker-peasant alliance as the basis of a broad national front, are all dealt with. So is the dual nature of the national bourgeoisie and our attitude to it.

Then the important new idea is developed that in the present situation favourable domestic and international conditions arise for the establishment of states of independent national democracy.

This is defined as a state which consistently upholds its political and economic independence, which fights against imperialism, blocs and war bases, one which fights against new forms of colonialism. A state which rejects dictatorial and despotic forms of government and provides broad democratic rights, enabling the people to work for agrarian reform and other democratic and social changes and to participate in shaping government policy. There is no doubt this important new conception will play a big part in the developments which lie ahead.

The Call for Working-Class and Democratic Unity

In our contribution to the Conference we dealt, among other things, with the situation in the British Labour movement and the idea of winning and consolidating a left progressive majority in the movement. There was the greatest interest in the position. The big next step for us in this conception, of course, is that of building effective unity between the Communist and Labour forces.

After the Twentieth Congress of the C.P.S.U. and in the 1957 Declaration the question of working-class unity was sharply put as a supreme issue in the capitalist countries. All at the Conference felt that new opportunities were arising, especially in the major countries of Western Europe. It was a key point in the speeches of Comrades Thorez, Longo, the Scandinavian comrades and others.

The Statement deals with the possibility of a broad democratic front against the monopolists, the grave tendencies to fascist rule arising in many countries. It makes a call for trade union unity, but as the points are clear, we will not elaborate them.

What is of the greatest concern to us is the strong call to heal the split in the working-class movement. This split on an international and national scale, it states, remains the principal obstacle to the achievement of the aims of the working class. The right wing leadership at all

costs wish to maintain it—we work to eliminate it.

When the Statement, in a principled way, exposes the political position of the right wing social democratic leaders, it only does what the majority of the Labour and Trade Union movement did at Scarborough on foreign policy and Clause 4. These very questions are at the root of the great controversy in the British Labour movement. And the statement noted how the battle for a change is mounting in the Labour movement in each country.

Yet, at the same time, the statement urges that these differences cannot be allowed to block the road to joint action on a national and international scale between Communist and Social Democratic parties on the burning issues of peace, support of the colonial struggle, national independence, protection of living standards and defence of democracy.

As the statement puts it:

"It is safe to say that on overcoming the split in its ranks, on achieving unity of action of all its contingents, the working class of many capitalist countries could deliver a heavy blow to the policy of the ruling circles in the capitalist countries. It could make them stop preparing a new war, repel the offensive of monopoly capitalism and have its daily vital and democratic demands met."

This is, and remains, our position. On every issue before the British people this united action is the burning need. The splendid but separate partial united actions which have taken place and are taking place should spur us on to achieve this aim. It will be the duty of our coming Party Congress to consider what fresh steps we can take.

It is of the greatest importance to note, too, that the statement advocated co-operation of the Communist Parties with the Socialist Parties not only for immediate demands, but, I quote, "in the struggle to win power and build socialism." It is suggested the Communists are prepared to discuss all these vital questions with Social Democrats.

This idea, of course, is a central point of the strategy of the advance to socialism in Britain outlined in our programme, *The British Road to Socialism*, and we welcome it.

The Forces of Transition to Socialism

In view of the political position of our own party and the central ideas and strategy of our programme, *The British Road to Socialism*, the points made in the Statement on the forms of transition to socialism are of the greatest interest.

Our case on all this is known, and we made it in the Conference.

The Marxist-Leninist Parties, the Statement says, head the struggle of the working class for the accomplishment of the socialist revolution and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat in one form or another. The forms and course of development of the socialist revolution depend on the specific balance of class forces in each country and on the organisation and maturity of the working class and its vanguard, and on the extent of the resistance put up by the ruling class.

Whatever form of dictatorship of the proletariat is established *it will always signify an extension of democracy, a transition from formal bourgeois democracy to genuine democracy, to democracy for the working people.*

The statement again endorsed the 1957 Declaration which said that the working class and the Communist Parties seek to achieve the socialist revolution by peaceful means.

"Today in a number of capitalist countries the working class, headed by its vanguard, has the opportunity, given a united working class and popular front or other workable forms of agreement and political co-operation between the different parties and public organisations, to unite the majority of the people, win state power without civil war and ensure the transfer of the basic means of production to the hands of the people."

Relying on the majority of the people, defeating right-wing opportunism, the working class can defeat reaction, secure a firm majority in parliament and transform it into a genuine instrument of the people's will. This requires great mass struggle inside and outside parliament to defeat the resistance of all the reactionary forces—the necessary condition for the peaceful realisation of the socialist revolution.

The ruling class never relinquishes power voluntarily. In the event of ruling-class violence, the Statement goes on, the possibility of the non-peaceful transition to socialism should be borne in mind. "In this case the degree of bitterness and the forms of the class struggle will depend not so much on the proletariat as on the resistance put up by the reactionary circles to the will of the overwhelming majority of the people, on these circles using force at one or other stage of the struggle for socialism." The actual possibility of one or other way of transition in each country depends on the definite historical conditions.

In our view this unanimous declaration is one of the most important of the Conference. It is part and parcel of the conception that we can prevent world war, that socialist revolution is not a by-

product of war. It is a further development of Lenin's idea.

We believe this is a decisive question for the political future of communism, not only in Britain but in France, Italy and other capitalist countries. Any other political line would result in the disastrous sectarian isolation of our movement.

The World Communist Movement

All Communist parties are sovereign and independent. There is no international Communist organisation with rules and constitution. Proper relations between the Communist parties and international unity, the defence of Communist principles and the proper working of the Communist parties is vital for our common advance.

In many ways, therefore, this section of the statement is of unique importance. The bold opening sentence, "The world Communist movement has become the most influential political force of our time" is not empty rhetoric, but sober fact.

The Leninist standards of party life, democratic centralism, party unity, party democracy, collective leadership, against the cult of the individual, criticism and self-criticism, are laid down as a law.

As in 1957, the statement calls for a struggle on two fronts, against revisionism, which remains the main danger, and against dogmatism and sectarianism. But, it says, the Communist parties have ideologically defeated the revisionists in their ranks. The exposure, above all, is of Yugoslav revisionism and right-wing opportunism, which distorts Marxism-Leninism. Like the 1957 Declaration, dogmatism and sectarianism, it warns, can also become the main danger at some stage of development in some parties—and there is a detailed analysis of what dogmatism and sectarianism can lead to.

Warning that the unity of the world Communist movement is vital in the face of imperialism, the Statement declares:

"The interests of the Communist movement require solidarity by every Communist Party in the observance of the estimates and conclusions on the common tasks, in the struggle against imperialism, for peace, democracy and socialism, jointly reached by the fraternal parties at their meetings."

A resolute defence of the unity of the world Communist movement and the prevention of any actions that would undermine that unity are a necessary condition for victory.

The unanimous statement is made that the C.P.S.U. has been and remains the universally recognised vanguard of the world Communist

movement and, finally, as in 1957—the statement again declares:

“The historic decisions of the Twentieth Congress are not only of great importance for the C.P.S.U. and Communist construction in the U.S.S.R., but have initiated a new stage in the world Communist movement and have promoted its development on the basis of Marxism-Leninism.”

Conclusion

You can imagine, therefore, our legitimate feeling of great and positive achievement when we assembled for the final plenary session. Here after much discussion, on what after all are vital issues for the future of humanity, was a unanimous Marxist-Leninist document of truly historical importance.

That this was an historic meeting has been recognised by friend and foe alike. The view that war is not inevitable is a great message of hope to humanity. Above all it is a call to action to save the world from thermo-nuclear war. War has ceased to be inevitable because of the strength of the world socialist system and the growth of the peace forces. The meeting has unanimously endorsed the socialist policy of peaceful co-existence, that in peaceful competition, socialism will rout capitalism. It has charted the course of victory in the great movement for national liberation and socialism for years ahead.

The nature of our epoch is the transition of the world from capitalism to socialism. The struggle for social change is the responsibility of the working-class movement in each country. The great change in the balance of world forces has created still more favourable conditions for advance to socialism, including possibilities in a number of countries of winning this change without civil war.

British Communists in particular support and welcome the statement, for these views are precisely the main ideas of our programme, *The British Road to Socialism*. It will have a special appeal in Britain, in view of the great peace movement, the tremendous struggle in the Labour movement, expressed in the Scarborough decisions—and now in the ever-growing protest against the Polaris bases—in all of which the Communists have played a vital part.

From this Executive Committee we call for a great renewed effort to win peace—Communists must become even more the standard-bearers for peace. Above all, to prevent the Polaris and the German troops training in Britain as the immedi-

ate aims of the struggle. We publicly declare to all peace movements that we will work for the common ends, and call for unity of all peace forces.

The Statement comes at a time of the most important situation in the Labour movement for years, when the battle for the fulfilment of the Scarborough decisions is raging. Its political reception by the left in the movement, expressed in *Tribune* and the motion initiated by Jennie Lee in Parliament, is an indication of its powerful appeal. Can we now get still greater efforts for working-class unity? We ask all left progressive forces—can't we unite our efforts for peace and socialism? We want the Scarborough decisions. Why? So that Labour could place itself at the head of the peace forces of the nation, as is happening in Scotland today over the Polaris base.

Our meeting spelled the doom of all the vain hopes of the imperialists for a split in our ranks. Soviet-Chinese unity is essential for peace and progress. That unity was triumphantly confirmed at Moscow. Comrades Khrushchov and Liu Shao-chi, in their stirring speeches at our final session, stressed the unbreakable unity of their two great Communist parties and their two great Socialist states. As the *Economist* gloomily noted after the Conference:

“But the Western governments can already bury the illusion and start getting accustomed to a new historical phase. The illusion is the hard-dying hope that the two Communist Parties will break apart. . . . It is idle to pin any hopes on a conflict between European Russia and Asiatic China.”

A defeat for them is a victory for the people. Not only for peace. The Statement shows the way of advance of the peoples for democracy, national liberation and socialism—as the *New Statesman* said, the new Communist Manifesto is “a landmark in Communist history”.

It is a vindication of our general political line. It will be a great ideological stimulation and preparation for our National Congress. We have already started our preparations. Let us boldly work out our resolutions and proposals so that our Congress marks a new stage in our mass position.

Study and popularise the Statement in the party and every section of the Labour and peace movement. Go forward with added strength in our great membership drive up to our Congress.

It was an honour and privilege to be present at this historic meeting. Now let us work to fulfil its aims.

Trade Unions and the Challenge of Technology

Jack Hendy

“THE mode of production of the material forms of existence,” said Marx, “conditions the whole process of social, political, and intellectual life”. No working-class organisations have a closer connection with the mode of production than the trade unions, and it is self-evident that their structure, their outlook, their policy and programme are conditioned by their economic environment.

It is, therefore, idle for the historian to deplore the narrow craft-consciousness of the New Model Unions of the mid-Victorian era, or to regret the lack of a correct appreciation of the nature of the capitalist state among the Industrial Syndicalists of the period before and after the first world war. Trade unions and their members are always the children of their own age—accepting the conditions of their own time as the normal state of affairs, and rarely troubled either with the experiences of their predecessors, or the problems of posterity.

Trade unions are the everyday proof of Marx’s assertion that “it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, it is their social existence that determines their consciousness”. As Harold Laski used to put it: “As men work, so also do they think.” The fact that today there is a ferment of thought in the British Trade Union movement is not because working men have addressed themselves to the query posed in the New Testament: “And which of you by taking thought can increase his stature?”—but rather because the familiar, well-trodden path of trade union organisation seems to have led to unmapped territory, and because there is enormous confusion as to what is the correct direction in which to proceed.

The reasons underlying this agonising dilemma are not far to seek. They arise from changes in the mode of production, which cannot fail to have a tremendous impact upon the relations of production, in other words, upon the whole employer-employee relationship and upon the trade union structure which has always been an appendage thereto.

I make no apology for describing the present British trade union structure as an appendage to the employer-employee relationship. Everyone is familiar with the time-honoured adherence of the

British T.U.C. to the concept of “Tripartite Responsibility”. Less familiar perhaps is the realisation of the degree to which British trade unions are in fact—and not merely in theoretical approach—the creature rather than the creators of their economic environment.

Every union regards it as its main function to carry out collective bargaining with employers, to reach agreements with employers that will maintain—and, where possible, improve—the living standards of the unions’ members. The essence of any bargain, however, is indicated in the literal definition of that word: “A favourable transaction; an advantageous purchase.” There is an implicit acceptance of the idea that a gain is to be made by *both* sides, even if, in fact, the achievement of the trade union consists only of recovering back some portion of the surplus already being realised by the employers through their ownership and control of the means of production.

Exploitation

All this is not to say that trade unions do not have any consciousness whatever that the system of capitalist production is in fact a system of exploitation. Many unions declare in their rule books that one of their objectives is to replace the present economic system by a system of socialism. Time and time again, union conferences denounce the inefficiencies and injustices of capitalist society, and call for an advance towards the planned prosperity of socialism. Few, however, are the union leaders who conduct their daily affairs with the inspiration of men who know what they fight for; and the constant recurring struggles with the employers both at national and at workshop level are still fought out on the narrow economic plane in which the real nature of the class struggle is rarely appreciated and is still less rarely openly admitted.

Trade union leaders, officers, and shop stewards who recognise the true character of the class struggle and who are honest and courageous enough to enlighten and give leadership to their fellow-workers are at once singled out for attack by every means of which the capitalist Establishment is capable. It is no accident that the *Daily Telegraph* spends much time and money in smelling-out and “exposing” every manifestation

of militancy; no accident that "a survey of modern trade unionism" is prepared (like Messrs. Cyriax and Oakeshott's *The Bargainers*) in which it is suggested that: "The role of the unions in the future would therefore seem to be that of providing a level-headed administration and a business-like service for the working man in industry."

It is no coincidence, either, that the capitalist Establishment ensures that honours are conferred upon leaders who accept "the realities of the situation"; that they are made welcome in Court and academic circles; and that the formation is encouraged within the more militant unions of groups of "loyalists" who contrive to sow doubt and confusion, and to undermine the continued support of such unions for progressive leaders and policies.

Function of trade unionism

All these efforts are made in order to keep the Trade Union movement firmly within its traditional, "constitutional", framework; to ensure that in a capitalist economy trade unions are distinguished not by their degree of leadership but rather of follower-ship; to make quite sure that the direction of industry remains firmly in the hands of the employing class.

The so-called York Memorandum of 1920 defining industrial relations in the engineering industry, commences with that well-known proclamation of authority: "The employers have the right to manage their establishments and the trade unions have the right to exercise their functions." Here is the theory of Prerogative Right expressed in terms of the bourgeois state; here—as Marx foresaw—is "liberty, fraternity, and Bentham"; here, in a nutshell, is all the economic and political theory of the capitalist era.

Yet, it must be admitted, all the negotiations and relationships in every industry still proceed within this general framework. Indeed there are trade union leaders who speak with pride and satisfaction of the wide range of functions which have been "accorded" to them under these arrangements, and who apply themselves as devotedly to their appointed task of maintaining "proper" relationships in industry, as did any major-domo in maintaining the decorum of the princely households of a by-gone age.

Lenin once wrote: "Any trade union secretary, an English one for instance, helps the workers to conduct the economic struggle, helps to expose factory abuses, explains the injustices of the laws and of measures which hamper the freedom of strikes and the freedom to picket, to warn all and sundry that a strike is proceeding at a certain factory, explains the partiality of arbitration courts

which are in the hands of the bourgeois classes, etc., etc. In a word, every trade union secretary conducts and helps to conduct 'the economic struggle against the employers and the government'."

One may be forgiven for regarding this statement as one characterised by an over-generous enthusiasm, pointing to the ideal rather than to the actual, even though such single-minded activity is, indeed, still found in the ranks of branch secretaries and of shop stewards. It is, however, far from being widespread in the higher reaches of the trade union movement. Here, rather, one recalls the acceptance by the General Council of the T.U.C. of the doctrine of wage freeze, until adherence to that doctrine was smashed by the revolt of the rank and file. One remembers, also, the enquiry set on foot in recent times by the General Council into unofficial disputes and the activities of shop stewards. One can note, too, the alacrity with which some leaders of the unions in the engineering industry have recently accepted the invitation of the Minister of Labour to join with him and the employers in joint discussions to seek means of eliminating the recurrent disputes in the motor industry.

It will not fail to be observed that the recent pattern of ruthless sackings in the industry has had a greater impact than all the labour disputes, but, of course, no one will suggest that the employers are doing more—albeit regretfully—than to exercise their undoubted rights as owners and proprietors to terminate what has temporarily become to them "uneconomic" activity.

Acceptance of capitalist ideology

The results of this general acceptance of the capitalist ideology, of what I term "followership", may be seen in many fields, but in none more clearly than in the general failure to secure for the workers a radical improvement in their share of the national income. In recent years productivity in industry has increased tremendously, but the workers have not shared in this development to any appreciable amount. The so-called "prosperity" to which our attention is so often drawn, is all too obviously the result of the fact that never before have so many people been at work, and never have so many worked so many hours.

This situation is not to be explained by the kind of reasoning adopted by Professor Paul Samuelson, who once wrote: "The reason men work for an employer is because they prefer to spend their time in that way to spending it in any other." Nor can the matter be summed up in the words of Messrs. Cyriax and Oakeshott with their suggestion that "at the margin, it seems, the British

worker prefers more money to more leisure at to-day's rates of pay".

The fact is that the workers and their trade unions have no real control either of production, of prices, or of the cost of living.

This does not mean that trade unions do not keep their noses at the grindstone of negotiations. They do—so close, it may be said, that they are unable to keep in focus the general trend of events. Let us take as an example the Electricity Supply Industry. Here we have seen astute and devoted leadership on the part of the spokesmen for the unions. The negotiating machinery has been described as first-class; the degree of union organisation very high. Yet the facts are that during the first ten years after nationalisation productivity rose by more than 50 per cent (1947-48=100); whilst during the same period real wage rates (i.e. wage rates adjusted to the cost of living index) rose by only 2½ per cent. The 1960 Report of the Electricity Council indicates that whilst the total wage bill is £100,080,000 the total capital charges for the same year amount to £163,730,000. The industry claims to have made a "surplus" of £26,700,000, depreciation is set at £95 million, and the bond-holders took a further £67 million. Clearly, in a situation of this kind, the trade unions are merely the sweepers-up in a rentiers' paradise.

Yet it is a fact that the average price of electricity is only 32 per cent above pre-nationalisation level, compared with a general level of prices more than 60 per cent above. If this, then, is the degree of exploitation in a nationalised industry, the situation in the industrial fields dominated by privately-owned capitalist monopolies can readily be imagined.

Small wonder that strenuous efforts are made to fog the real issue, to pretend that the class struggle is old-fashioned, to suggest that "you've never had it so good", and that the time has arrived for the trade unions to "provide their members with a business service rather than a moral platform". If only everything can be arranged to continue in the way it is going, everyone can have the best of everything in this best of all possible worlds.

Changes

However, changes are at hand, changes which will rock to their foundations the existing relationships in industry, and which will compel a re-adjustment of trade union concepts of organisation, and a re-alignment of forces.

Fundamental to any consideration of these matters is the realisation that the worker can derive his income, in capitalist society, only by employment, only by selling his labour-power to

an employer who expects to make a profit from using it. To the employer, labour is a cost, a factor of production, of which the price must be kept to the economic minimum. In conditions of modern monopoly, moreover, the extent of the market is limited; profit is made by intensifying exploitation rather than by general expansion of the economic system, and there is, therefore, not only a continuous urge to capture markets not already monopolised, but to produce at the lowest possible cost and greatest possible efficiency for the limited sector of the market already held, whilst holding selling-prices as high as possible. As we have already seen, trade unions have fitted into these arrangements as best they could, some of them with protest, others (as in the steel industry) with gusto, guided by the tipsters' slogan of "follow the money".

Innovation

Into this devil's cauldron of contradictions now enters that most infernal of all machines—technological innovation. Innovation may be fostered by the needs of war—the degree to which this is being done must be apparent to all. More usually the incentive is derived from the pressures of what has been called "monopoly competition", which is now fostering war itself. Very often it appears that, with what was once called "the invention of invention", technological innovation has a life and momentum all of its own.

As Bacon remarked long ago: "Every medicine is an innovation; he that will not apply new remedies must expect new evils: for time is the greatest innovator." Certainly some very strong medicine is about to be served to our trade union movement, and if new evils are to be avoided it must raise its eyes from the grindstone and take a look at what is happening around us.

In a recent lecture, Dr. S. Lilley has surveyed the field of modern technical advance and drawn attention to the points at which this advance is making an impact on received ideas of industrial relations. Space does not permit a full appreciation of this wide-ranging survey, but a few of the matters to which Dr. Lilley drew attention may suffice to indicate their general tenor and relevance.

Thus, he said, two general developments that affect us all are the introduction of (a) synthetic materials, and (b) automation.

Let us consider the first. Previously industry had to take the best available material. This usually combined properties desirable and undesirable. Every job was therefore a compromise, and never fully efficient. Now we are reaching the stage where one can specify all the qualities

desired and have suitable material created to order. The obvious result of this advance is that it gives a better product; and by avoiding the need for compromises and modifications on the job it increases productivity. Less obvious is the fact that its use renders some skills redundant, and upsets traditional usages and forms of labour organisation.

Then, automation. This is not just a set of tricks applied here and there. It is a new approach to the problem of manufacture. The essential feature is the equipping of machines themselves so that they can "observe" their own progress and "decide" what to do next. There is therefore a distinct difference between mechanisation and automation. In general, automation takes two main forms: transfer automation, and programme control. Transfer automation is now widely employed, for example, in the motor industry. It is a system in which the machine does not only its own machining, but its fetching and carrying, and the marshalling of the various processes of manufacture, supervising itself and eliminating the need for the attention of the operators who were so necessary with individual single-purpose machines. In his well-known book, published in 1957, Dr. Lilley gave detailed examples of this system, and of the labour time saved by its use. For example, he mentioned the Ford transfer line at Cleveland, Ohio—1,545 feet long, with forty-two such machines doing 530 operations and inspections, and needing only forty-one workers as against the 117 previously used by earlier Ford methods, which were already (as we may guess) highly advanced.

Programme control, however, has still greater possibilities. This form of automation consists, briefly, of equipping a machine with sufficient "intelligence" to read a set of instructions presented to it and to translate these instructions into action. The instructions are presented usually in the form of patterns of holes punched in a paper tape—though they may now be presented in other ways, e.g. by a variation of hydraulic or electrical pressures.

The punching of tape is done on a machine like a teletypewriter, and the skill required by the girl who uses it can be acquired in a few weeks of training. This system, of course—unlike the transfer machines—is equally applicable to short runs and even prototype work.

Perhaps the most dramatic development of programme control has been the electronic computer. Enough has already been said about its amazing versatility to excuse further elaboration here, but what should be noted is the degree to which it renders human effort redundant, even at what

used to be regarded as managerial level. Already in 1957 the American General Electric Company was using a machine which saved half a million dollars a year in clerical costs, and as Lilley remarked: "Obviously the work of a large proportion of Britain's 2½ million clerks could be affected for good or ill by the progress of computers in the next few years."

In his book, Dr. Lilley had described a highly automated piston plant in the U.S.S.R. producing 3,500 pistons in a twenty-four-hour day, with a total staff of nine men per shift. In his more recent lecture he stated that the maintenance men in this plant average only twenty minutes per day on manual work, and spend the rest of the day studying to improve their ability or in devising better systems of maintenance.

One wonders whether they would be permitted time to stand and stare under our system of enterprise. Mr. G. Cole of the Electrical Trades Union has asserted that Imperial Chemical Industries Ltd., have in recent years eliminated 10,000 job-opportunities through the introduction of planned maintenance in their factories; and on the subject of studying to improve ability, the spokesman of at least one employers' association is on record as saying that apprenticeship training is "a luxury which industry can ill-afford".

Effects of technical advances

The effects of new technical advances cannot be summed up in a few sentences. That they will be widespread goes without saying, but their general direction will not be one-sided. The new techniques will render unnecessary a great deal of unskilled, repetitive labour. On the other hand they will equally render redundant many accepted industrial skills. They will call on the one hand for new skills and a much higher level of technical training; on the other hand they will destroy to a large extent the traditional division between mental and manual labour. Already in British industry, despite the Tory claim that there is a "movement of the workers to the right and into the middle class," we can see the ending of the economic independence of the professional man, and his gradual submergence into the ranks of the salaried employees.

This it is that explains the growth of "white-collar" trade unionism, even though many of the technical and administrative grades think of themselves as part of the management, and continue to identify their interests with those of the capitalists who own and control industry. A tremendous responsibility rests upon the trade union movement to adjust itself to this growing development. The allegiance of these newcomers to industrial

organisation will not be achieved merely by setting on foot new forms of industrial arbitration—as was suggested at a recent Trades Union Congress—which will recognise their bargaining rights and remedy their discontents. The allegiance of these people will be secured only when trade unionists give to them the degree of industrial support they traditionally give to each other. We should cease to wonder that bank managers march. We should be wondering why they have to march alone.

But the main impact of new technical developments will undoubtedly be upon the manual wage-earners. Their unions will, of necessity, have to reconsider their whole organisational policy. It may be true, as the President of the A.U.B.T.W. remarked recently in a discussion on the B.B.C. Third Programme, that “no-one wants more than the operative to take the back-breaking labour out of laying bricks”; and it may be true, as he asserted, that the Plumbing Trades Union is to be commended for the training it has inaugurated to keep its members abreast of modern developments such as welding. The fact is that the one thing every building worker—and every other worker—is mainly concerned with is the need to keep a job.

Here is the crux of the problem. This explains the equivocal attitude of even the most progressive unions, which recognise on the one hand the need for improved training, for higher skill and knowledge, for the enlargement of opportunities for apprenticeship; but which on the other hand immediately fight any departure from customary lines of demarcation, and oppose any increase in the ratio of apprentices to skilled workmen.

I recall that when I met the executive committee of the Electrical Workers Union of the U.S.S.R., six of the seven members of its presidium admitted that they were personally attending university continuation courses to keep their technical knowledge abreast of modern developments. Such an example, however to be admired, is unlikely to have its imitators in the British trade union movement. The reason is obvious. The British trade union leader has to devote himself to his threefold function of administrator, organiser, and negotiator. He has neither the time nor the opportunity to develop his own technical knowledge, let alone to take a hand in the direction of the development of industry—an activity which is everyday business to the Soviet trade unions.

Yet it is clear that trade unions will have, of necessity, to take a different view of their “freedom to exercise their functions” than the traditional one envisaged in the York Memorandum. The problems confronting us to-day will not be

solved by traditional methods of negotiation and organisation conducted within the framework of accepted ideas.

Technical developments in the building industry, for example, have already brought out into the open the contradictions and differences between the approach typical of the general unions which play the leading role in the civil engineering industry, and those typical of the skilled unions which play the dominant part in the building industry. The gradual coalescence of the two industries, the introduction of new methods of production, the factory pre-processing of various components—all these were the factors which triggered off angry disputations between the representatives of the various unions gathered at the last conference of the National Federation of Building Trade Operatives. These problems are far from being solved. The indications are that they will become more intense, for these industries, long claimed to have remained unchanged since the days when Noah built the Ark, are now undergoing a technological revolution.

Similarly in other industries. All the feather-bedding in the world will not protect the electricity supply workers from the effects of the cross-Channel high-tension cable, which if successful—and there is every reason to expect it will be—will shatter eventually not only the shift-system, but the security of employment in the industry. In these circumstances, the maintenance by the T.U.C. of a ban upon international electrical union conferences is a disservice to the workers both of Britain and of Europe. Technical development and its results will not wait upon the conversion of the General Council. As in the case of the wage-freeze, their intransigence must be overcome and defeated.

Training

One could at this point, if time permitted, dwell also at length upon the advent of atomic energy, with its present and future possibilities in so many directions; with the development of electronics; with the battle between oil and coal; but all would take far too long to work out in sufficient detail. One must be content to point to an even more explosive force—namely the contemporary rise in the number of people, particularly young people, seeking the right to training and to work. Commissions and committees have sat to consider this problem. Educationists have pointed both to the dangers and to the opportunities, whilst there has grown more steadily a realisation of the degree to which this country is falling behind countries abroad, particularly the socialist countries, in

economic advance, in technical development, and in educational opportunity.

Is our trade union movement equipped and led in a manner calculated to achieve the solution of all these problems? Clearly the answer is that it is not. There are still, as Harry Pollit was insistent on repeating, "far too many unions, far too few trade unionists". There are far too many organisations fighting in defence of groups, far too few fighting to advance the working class as a whole.

For these problems cannot be overcome within the narrow framework of the profit-making economy. They call for a challenge to the economy itself, for a radical reconstruction of the existing social order.

The people who cry that the class struggle is dead, that we have now achieved the affluent society, that trade unions should be conducted like insurance companies, are simply not in touch with the real facts of life. The workers' right to freedom and prosperity, to exercise control over his own destiny, to leisure, to education, and to work and wages—all these are being throttled by the instruments of his own productivity, because these instruments of production are themselves the property of monopoly capitalism and used for its own purposes.

Trade unions still have before them, unfinished,

their main objective. As Mr. Ted Roberts, General Secretary of the Sheet Metal Workers, once put it—in his evidence to the Jack Committee of Inquiry into the London Airport Dispute—"It should be pointed out that the trade unions are not an extension of the employer's personnel department. It is not the function of the trade unions or of the trade union officers to issue instructions to their members on behalf of the employers. . . . Trade unionism is both a defensive and offensive weapon for maintaining and improving labour standards".

The time has come for trade unions to take the offensive, to advance from the straitjacket of constitutionalism imposed by the legendary "tripartite responsibility" of the Mondist era, which saw trade unionism's primary duty as loyalty to the employers' interests. The one true way forward is to advance from defence to attack, and to lay the axe to the root of monopoly capitalism itself. By no other means can be achieved the solution of our present problems, and the emancipation of the working class. Every other expedient means ultimately subservience to the present masters of the economy, means sharing with them despair and defeat in the great race for economic and political progress which is now gathering increasing momentum in the rest of the civilised world.

(We shall welcome discussion contributions on the points raised in this article.—Editorial Board.)

Bourgeois Freedom and Rents

John Hostettler

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY has seen many bitter struggles between tenant and landlord which have revealed how deeply involved the government, the press, the police and the courts are in denying freedom to the working people. The recent dramatic St. Pancras rents siege has focused attention again on this important feature of capitalist society.

At the present new stage of active struggles by council and decontrolled tenants against government rent and housing policy it is of interest to consider what conclusions can be drawn from examining the general rent struggle in relation to the working-class view of freedom.

Prior to the first world war the issue was simple. Landlords had all the freedom—tenants none. Landlords could charge the maximum rent they could get, and they held without restriction the terrible power to evict tenants and their families at will. What this meant for many people in terms of human misery, degradation and suffering can in some small degree be felt in reading Jack London's *People of the Abyss*, describing life in London's East End at the turn of the century, and contemporary Poor Law reports.

For a hundred years capitalism had made no effort to provide homes for the majority of the population. It was considered enough if workers could find a room and a bed in some overcrowded, damp, dark, rotting dwelling for themselves and their families; a "luxury" for which a sizeable part of their wages was taken in rent. Although working-class strength was developed and used first in industry, at the point of exploitation, it became certain with the growth of militant trade unionism and the formation by the working class of an independent political party, that the movement would sooner or later tackle this situation. The decisive change came in the first world war when workers were needed in their millions as cannon fodder for the imperialist war machine. Taking advantage of their experience and organising ability, as well as the government's desire to avoid unrest, they joined battle with the landlords and the government to stop rapid rent rises and profiteering.

In 1915 the tenants' movement in Glasgow, supported by the Clydeside industrial workers, forced the first Rent Restriction Act from a

Lloyd George openly fearful of the effects of large-scale class warfare on the troops and the war effort. William Gallacher describes the scene in his *Revolt on the Clyde*:

On the day of the trial Glasgow witnessed a demonstration the like of which had never been seen before. From early morning the women were marching to the centre of the city where the sheriff's court is situated. But even as they marched, mighty reinforcements were coming in from the workshops and the yards. . . .

Into the streets around the sheriff's court the workers marched from all sides. All the streets were packed. Traffic was completely stopped. . . . Inside the court the sheriff and his clerks were white with apprehension. A deputation of workers, men and women, were demanding to be heard. At any moment the deputation might be followed by a surging, irresistible crowd of angry men and women. It was obvious to the sheriff that the situation was too desperate to play with. He telephoned to Mr. Lloyd George "The workers are threatening to pull down Glasgow," he said. "What am I to do?" "Stop the case," he was told, "a Rent Restriction Act will be introduced immediately."

This Act began a new era in rent and housing struggles, and the relations between landlord and tenant existing before 1915 have never been restored, although in the years since, both sides have advanced and retreated with the ebb and flow of both their own strength and the class struggle.

Reversing freedoms

The first Rent Restriction Act established two fundamental principles of rent legislation. First, it prevented landlords raising rents above the rent being paid for a dwelling at the outbreak of war in August 1914, and secondly it prevented landlords evicting tenants except in the relatively rare cases it specified. In this the Act clearly restricted the freedom of the landlords and in direct ratio it gave a new degree of freedom to tenants.

Its enactment was a clear illustration of Engels' reference to the "rising power of the proletariat" in his description of the relation between the general system of law and the economic and social conditions that give rise to it. Engels had

written in a letter to Conrad Schmidt on October 27th, 1890:

In a modern state, law must not only correspond to the general economic position and be its expression, but must also be an expression which is *consistent in itself*, and which does not, owing to inner contradictions, look glaringly inconsistent. And in order to achieve this, the faithful reflections of economic conditions is more and more infringed upon. All the more so, the more rarely it happens that a code of law is the blunt, unmitigated, unadulterated expression of the domination of a class—this in itself would offend against the “conception of justice”. Even in the Code Napoléon, the pure logical conception of justice held by the revolutionary bourgeoisie of 1792-6 is already unadulterated in many ways, and in so far as it is embodied there, has daily to undergo all sorts of attenuation owing to the rising power of the proletariat. . . .

Thus, to a great extent, the course of the “development of law” only consists, first in the attempt to do away with the contradictions arising from the direct translation of economic relations into legal principles, and to establish a harmonious system of law, and then in the repeated breaches made in this system by the influence and pressure of further economic development, which involves it in further contradictions (I am only speaking here of civil law for the moment).

The first Rent Act was precisely such a breach in the desired “harmonious system of law”.

Restoring freedom to the landlords

Not surprisingly in the years following the first world war successive Tory governments were busy devising methods for restoring to the landlords their “rights”, and taking away from tenants the measure of protection they had secured. To decontrol dwellings, i.e. to take landlords outside the control over them of the Rent Restriction Act, was the aim.

Further Rent Acts were passed in the 1920's and 1930's, each going as far in decontrol as the Tories could go in relation to the strength of class and political forces in the country. They led to fresh actions by tenants' associations, of which the most famous were in London and Birmingham, and to the formation of a national tenants' organisation.

In *Our Flag Stays Red* Phil Piratin gives a vivid picture of the rent strikes in Stepney and Bethnal Green in the years just prior to the second world war. Pitched battles with bailiffs and police were fought with barbed wire barricades, and pickets were on duty day and night. In one case, after a twenty-one weeks' rent strike, the tenants

secured from their landlords: £1,000 worth of rent reductions; the cancellation of £10,000 worth of arrears; £2,500 to be spent on repairs immediately, and £1,500 each succeeding year.

These struggles forced the Tories to act slowly and their aim of abolishing rent control had to be abandoned on the outbreak of war when the Chamberlain government, with the recent rent struggles well in mind, and frightened by visions of another 1915, immediately introduced a new Rent Restriction Act which brought almost all private landlord tenancies under control.

Again a rent ceiling was fixed—this time the rent paid for each dwelling in September 1939—and again landlords were clamped in a policy of no evictions. The power of the working class in wartime was demonstrated anew.

This situation continued until Winston Churchill's government of 1951 was returned (on a minority vote) with its demagogic slogan “Set the People Free”.

Despite the hypocrisy of such a slogan for the majority of the population, at least the landlords had expectations, as the Tories had long and loud proclaimed their intention of freeing property owners from rent control.

This was not to be achieved on any scale, however, until the passing of the now infamous Rent Act of 1957, which decontrolled 800,000 tenants in one swoop and provided that other properties would become decontrolled automatically when there was a change of tenant (known as “creeping decontrol”). Over these tenants landlords once again had power to evict at will, or to raise the rent to any figure they could get. It has been estimated that this creeping decontrol affects 125,000 homes every year. In addition all tenants remaining protected for the moment, could, by this Act, have their rents raised to a figure equal to twice the gross value of their dwelling with provision for minor variations in certain cases.

The struggle for freedom

This harsh Act raised a terrific storm of protest. Fearing the effects of the chaos likely to result from so many evictions taking place simultaneously, and when a General Election was looming, the Tories hurriedly passed another Act in 1958. This was intended to modify the effects of decontrol for a short period and spread out the evictions, so that tens of thousands of tenants and their families would not be put on the streets at the same time. The three-year life of that Act is now passing, however, and although it has achieved the spreading over of the new wave of

evictions and rent increases, the battle is flaring up again.

The passing of more than twenty-four Acts dealing with rents since 1915, and the frequent struggles they have generated, illustrate that on this issue there rages a more or less permanent battle, with a points victory for one side or the other at various stages.

In fact once this "freedom of tenant versus freedom of landlord" battle was joined it was bound to remain permanent, although with varying degrees of intensity at different periods. Tenants are forever striving for more freedom, i.e., protection from eviction and sky-high rents, whilst landlords always resist such incursions into their own liberty to do as they pleased with their property and "their" tenants. And just how far the tenant or the landlords are on top is always decided by the class battle and the relation of forces of the two contending parties and their allies.

Yet whatever it involves, the landlord cannot give up the struggle. For housing is a commodity and the landlord must continually strive for the maximum return on his capital. A letting is a commodity sale with the tenant purchasing the temporary use of a dwelling. As Engels showed in *The Housing Question*, a landlord by letting a house sells it use-value piecemeal, and each time for a definite period. The exchange-value of the house is therefore realised only gradually, and as compensation for renouncing the immediate repayment of his capital investment the landlord receives rent equal, over the period of the life of the house, to the capital invested, the profit on it and, in addition, interest on the gradually maturing capital and profit. That this is no hardship can be seen from recent profit returns of a number of typical property companies owning substantial quantities of residential property:

	Net Profit			
	1957	1958	1959	1960
	£	£	£	£
London County				
Freehold and Leasehold	271,000	298,000	443,000	582,000
Alliance Property Company	19,000	79,000	191,000	320,000
Raglan Property Trust	58,000	68,000	92,000	103,000
Property Holding and Investment Trust	48,000	56,000	88,000	134,000

In fact landlords' income in rents had already risen from £872 million in 1957 to £1,031 million

in 1958, according to the Government Blue Book on National Income and Expenditure, despite the fact that the Act hardly began to operate before October 1958.

On August 8th, 1960, the London County and Midland Trust Ltd. promised doubled profits to its shareholders with dividends rising from 6 per cent (i.e. £60,000) in 1960 to 12½ per cent (i.e. £120,000) in 1962.

The Peachey Property Corporation recently decided to concentrate on income from rents as a property investment company as distinct from its former position as a property trading concern. In line with this policy the company purchased additional properties in London on March 2nd of this year for a figure mentioned by the newspapers as being nearly £2,500,000.

Some weeks later, in May, a spokesman of the Peachey Corporation announced that their rent increases of about 200 per cent represented the correct market value. It has now been announced that by June 1961 the Corporation's net income would be running at a rate of over £1,100,000 a year.

Lest it be thought the ceiling has now been reached, Group-Captain Maurice Newnham, chairman of Raglan Property Trust, in his annual review issued with the 1959-60 accounts, said:

"Higher rents allowed by the Rent Act are coming into effect on a graduated scale and it is estimated that a further increase of at least £16,000 will accrue during 1960-61 with further increases during following years."

Mr. Bullock, chairman of Property Holding & Investment Trust, was reported in the *Investors Chronicle* for August 19th, 1960, as saying:

"Your directors look forward with confidence to the future. As and when existing leases fall in, it is anticipated that it will be possible either to renew or to obtain new lettings on more favourable terms. The properties decontrolled by the Rent Act, 1957, were practically wholly let on lease for three years, which expires in September, 1960."

References to "market" rents are, of course, humbug, for all landlords know, and are taking advantage, of the opportunity to profit from outrageous rents because of the housing scarcity.

State aid for landlords

In this never-ending struggle for a maximum return, landlords look to the capitalist state for assistance and, as we might expect, they find all the resources of the state placed willingly at their service.

To start with, the general law is on the side of the landlords except for the "breaches" men-

tioned by Engels. The government is only too willing, if it can, to establish a "harmonious system of law" and it is happy to initiate legislation to restore to landlords the position wrested from them in times of war or other periods of difficulty for the ruling class.

Parliament is hamstrung and in the modern age of Whips and the two-party system, the government's proposals get the necessary rubber stamp—after minor variations to give a facade of democracy. As Sir W. Ivor Jennings put it in his *Cabinet Government*:

"If the government has a majority, and so long as that majority holds together, the House does not control the government but the government controls the House. . . . The function of the House of Commons is not to control the government but to act as a forum for criticism and a focus of outside opposition."

It will be noticed that Sir Ivor Jennings is speaking here, not of the Opposition but of the House of Commons itself.

Of course, there is no real division in the Tory Party on this issue. Their basic attitude is well summed up by Mr. Enoch Powell, the Minister of Health, who stated on November 22nd, 1959, that it was time the government considered abolishing the subsidy of £100 million a year to tenants of council houses (a step that would mean an average increase of rent of 9s. a week for all council tenants—J.H.), for this system was incompatible with the sort of free economy the government is trying to create. "The council house system is immoral and socially damaging," he said.

At this year's Tory Party Conference, Mr. Powell developed his ideas on freedom and rents and was described by the *Guardian* (12.9.60) as having a "fierce single-mindedness" and who—"not being the man to hide behind generalities in his defence of individual liberty—expresses the conflict in terms of policy."

What the Minister said was that a free market in accommodation was one of the important freedoms. The Rent Act and the reduction of subsidies were vital steps in the restoration of this freedom. "It is gradually having that effect," he added, "though not without hardship in some cases." Freedom and hardship are both referred to here in general terms, but it is clear that the freedom is for the landlords and the hardship for the tenants. Tory "opportunity" gives something to all!

Mr. Powell is a member of the government, and his views coincide with those of the landlords and the City. If the government hesitates in carrying through this policy and does so in

stages, that is because it is fearful of tenants and the Labour movement—not Parliament (unless it responds to mass pressure) for, if the need arises, it can command a majority of votes in Parliament by use of its Whips and its threats to Tory M.P.s of dissolution.

Yet, even this is not often necessary when the Tories are in power. For the right-wing Parliamentary Labour Party has always seen itself as Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, with its Shadow Cabinet acting in a most responsible manner and putting forward the near-Tory policy it would adopt if in power.

Opposition to Tory Rent Bills inside Parliament usually comes only from a few individual Labour M.P.s who fight in committee to improve such Bills. When their efforts are frustrated by Tory votes or by Closure or Guillotine, they rarely receive any fighting support from the Parliamentary Labour Party despite the fact that traditionally landowners have formed—and still do—a high proportion of both Houses of Parliament. Such as Members like Sir John Mellor, former Tory M.P., and Viscount Buckmaster, Conservative Peer, described by *Labour Research* as a "veteran crusader for the landlords' cause both inside and outside the House of Lords".

Both these men are directors of London County Freehold and Leasehold Properties, and like all other M.P.s and Lords with interests in property, they have been able to speak and vote in Parliament on rents legislation in contrast to the position of councillors who, by virtue of being council tenants, are prevented from voting in council meetings on questions of council rents.*

Of course, a Tory government prefers no discussion of its measures at all, either inside or outside Parliament, and the 1957 Rent Act provides that further measures of decontrol can in future be introduced by Orders in Council instead of new Rent Bills.

Alongside the law and legislation, all the departments of state, state institutions and the legal apparatus lend a hand and give landlords continual assistance.

So far as the Civil Service is concerned it is almost exclusively Tory-minded at the top, but the Labour right wing likes it as it is. Labour's policy document *Personal Freedom* asserts that "this country has the most efficient, incorruptible and 'non-political' Civil Service in the world" and far from wanting to change it, the document proposes only that its standards of *courtesy* be

* Recently members of the Northampton Borough Council, who were Council tenants and voted on rent matters, were prosecuted, and the Lord Chief Justice dismissed their appeal.

improved! Ask a St. Pancras tenant what he thinks of that revolutionary proposal.

The courts are another example. County courts in England and Wales are often flooded with cases of dispute between landlord and tenant. In some cases, the hands of the court are tied by statute. For example, the 1958 Landlord and Tenant (Temporary Provisions) Act allows de-controlled tenants who have received notice to quit to apply to the court for relief. But the Act lays down that the court *must* first make an order for possession in favour of the landlord, and only after that (and then only if the tenant satisfies certain conditions) the court can suspend the order for a limited time and fix the rent at a figure based on a means test. A means test for the tenant, of course; the landlord is not required in court to reveal *his* income. The basic feature of this Act, which is popularly thought to help tenants, is that an order for possession must be made first.

In other cases, where the tenants are still controlled, the courts have power to decide whether an order for possession should be made or not. Here the judges have great power over the lives of people, and generally speaking their background is such that they have more sympathy with landlords than tenants. Yet, in order to further accentuate this natural disposition it has been held by the Court of Appeal that where hardship is considered by a judge to fall about equally on landlord and tenant the landlord should get the benefit of the doubt.

The Court of Appeal was also the scene, on February 12th, 1960, of the statement by Lord Goddard, former Lord Chief Justice, that it was high time the Rent Restriction Acts disappeared, because they had inflicted extraordinary hardship on landlords.

When a court has decided a tenant shall be evicted the landlord can then sit back and wait while the court bailiff, often supported by the police, carries out the actual eviction.

Council tenants

Council tenants are not "protected" by rent restriction, and when Don Cook and Arthur Rowe barricaded themselves in their St. Pancras council flats to prevent eviction, bailiffs, supported by 400 police, were on the job to break in at 6 a.m.

A *Daily Mail* reporter made some interesting points in connection with what he called "the most massive police operation since the war". He said:

"Assistant Commissioner Douglas Webb of Scotland Yard drew up the secret battle plan to

protect the bailiffs when they evicted the rent strikers. It meant collecting 400 men from ten police divisions in vans, dropping them half a mile from the besieged flats, so as not to alarm the look-outs. The plan started to take shape days ago, when the Assistant Commissioner ordered senior officers from the Yard to be posted at various trouble spots in St. Pancras. They reported to him on the likely strength of the opposition, and the mood of the demonstrators who would try to beat off the bailiffs....

"The next stage of the plan started when the Registrar of Bloomsbury County Court told the Assistant Commissioner that he intended to send in his bailiffs early on Thursday. Mr. Webb knew that under section 120 (4) of the County Courts Act of 1959 he had power to use police to assist in the enforcement of the warrants. The final plan was drawn up on Wednesday evening, and the secret orders were issued just before midnight" (*Daily Mail*, 26.9.60).

Of course this revealing comment is not a criticism of the police. It is a bouquet, and most readers of the capitalist press might assume, in the absence of any facts about the tenants' movement and its demands, that the police had saved the country from some impending disaster.

In fact, the police as part of the state machine, are often used against the tenants and in St. Pancras they were also used—at times as many as a thousand strong—to attack with drawn batons the peaceful and legal demonstrations of the tenants. And when it was becoming clear that the police actions were provocative and that wide sections of industrial workers might follow the lead of the railwaymen and building workers who came out on strike against police brutality and the evictions, the Home Secretary banned processions in the Borough for three months. In doing so, and thus denying democratic rights, he used the Public Order Act of 1936, which was passed specifically as a measure against the fascist movement.

At the same time scores of tenants were arrested and prosecuted by the same police in magistrates' courts, of which it is often said that they accept police evidence without question.

In fact in such cases courts frequently say the police have to be protected by the law and send a demonstrator, who thinks he is exercising his democratic rights and carrying out his class duty, to prison as a step to preserve "freedom".

What an example to the world of British democracy! Despite our much-vaunted democratic rights these incidents reveal the truth that freedom exists only to the extent that it is fought for. The ruling class has in reserve laws to provide for the use of every part of the state machine against the people when they try to use their fundamental liberties in a way the government does not like.

And what kind of freedom is left if it can only be enjoyed when the government are agreeable?

In all this the press, too, is well to the fore. Except for the *Daily Worker* every newspaper in this country applauded the actions of the police and the Home Secretary in St. Pancras, whilst making sure that no reader was told what was really going on.

First they imposed a virtual censorship on real news and facts about the rents struggles for months (plenty of gossip was allowed of course), then when the police offensive started, biased comment and a one-sided case appeared which, in the absence of facts about the tenants' position, could be presented as "informed opinion".

This is only to be expected in a capitalist society, where the press lords and barons—at present reducing the number of newspapers to a smaller and smaller circle—share the same profit motive as landlords. Both are big business and are inter-related as well as being closely linked with the monopoly-finance interests of the city. These interests completely dominate and control the lucrative property market.

Size of the problem

In this country at the present time there are some 15 million dwellings. Of these 6,500,000 are owned by landlords, over 5 million are owner-occupied and nearly 4 million are council owned.

As already shown, the bigger landlords are property companies making vast profits out of lettings. In greater London average rent increases are 160 per cent over the pre-Rent Act rent of 1957, and in some cases rents are between 40 and 50 per cent of the tenants' gross income.

The companies form a powerful "lobby" for exerting pressure on the government and it is interesting to note the statement of the National Executive of the National Federation of Property Owners that the Federation did not, as was sometimes alleged, exercise influence behind the scenes with Ministers or M.P.s. Presumably, the important word was "improper" for they went on to say that they "criticise all proposals for legislation which appear to be unsatisfactory, unfair or unwise", but equally they "support all such proposals which are genuinely intended to improve and assist housing and property problems". In an effort to appear impartial, the property owners are apparently reduced to assisting "problems". Their phraseology cannot hide, however, the powerful influence they exert on the government.

Owner-occupiers are also exploited and often pay as much as £5,000 interest on a mortgage raised to borrow £3,000 to buy a small house. This can easily mean £6 a week in repayments

and interest. Mortgage interest rates are currently 6 per cent and 7 per cent compared with 4 per cent and less under the post-war Labour governments.

Tenants of council houses pay fantastic sums of interest to the City of London on housing loans. As the *Guardian* has pointed out: "It was calculated last year in St. Pancras, not untypical in this respect, that every £100 of rent collected was used as follows: Interest charges £51; loan repayments £15; repairs £22; management £12" (10.8.60). That is, 51 per cent of the rent went to swell the coffers of the rich financiers and money lenders. And it is to protect their *interest* that the law, the court bailiffs and the police are brought so swiftly into action.

Here then we can see the true state of affairs. Freedom is a class issue. In capitalist society the employers, financiers, landlords, press lords and their class enjoy freedom to exploit by various means the working class and the middle strata, whose only freedom is that won from the ruling class and maintained in struggle. It is a continuous daily battle in which the ruling class uses every weapon at its disposal including the state machine, the press, radio, television, police, law courts and the schools. For, in part, the battle is ideological. But a generation of experience is also a good teacher, and the working class, with that and its present-day organisation and militant strength, is well on its way to final victory.

With the achievement of a socialist government in Britain, we shall see an end put to the social contradictions that exist between landlord and tenant. No one will be able to own property to let to others at a profit. Landlords and city financiers will become extinct species. Homes will be used for living in and not for making money. Some people will own their own dwelling, others will rent a flat or a house, but as tenants, they will pay for its repair and maintenance only, which is why in socialist countries rent usually averages about 4 per cent to 5 per cent of the householder's income. No profits and interest rates will have to be paid for. All tenants will have security of tenure, standards will be improved, labour-saving devices and central heating will be universally provided. The main aim of a socialist government will be to meet the needs of the tenants and housewives, at the same time building proper communities with decent houses and planned surroundings.

Great economic and other advantages will ensue to tenants and owner-occupiers, but the essence is that they will have secured their freedom. With the landlords and financiers thrown from their backs, this long drawn-out struggle will have been won for all time.

The Two-Party System in Britain

Lionel Munby

THE ruling class in every capitalist country are strengthened by the propaganda of a national myth. In Britain this takes the form that Britain has progressed by compromise and adaptation rather than by revolution; the instrument of this progress is a two-party system, by which a party of progress has alternated in power with a party preserving the best of the heritage of the past, through a system of ins and outs, which gives effective executive government, but always preserves for the citizen the possibility of removing and replacing the strong executive.

Belief in this myth is one of the strongest factors influencing sincere Socialist members of the Labour Party towards compromise with and surrender to the Gaitskellites. This makes it all the more important for Socialists to study seriously the history of the party system in Britain. It is remarkable what a wide gap exists between the view still taught in schools, puffed in the newspapers and made the subject matter of political clap-trap, and the view accepted by the great majority of academic historians, from left to right, who have naturally done research into the history of British political parties and the party system.

To clear the subject of confusion, one must begin by emphasising known facts, which are only too conveniently and frequently forgotten.

Although Britain has been a constitutionally-governed country since the seventeenth century, it has only been a full political democracy since 1918 (1928). Even after the Reform Act of 1884, which gave a parliamentary vote to the male householder-ratepayer, only between 12 per cent and 14 per cent of the population had a vote! Not until 1918, when all adult males over twenty-one and all women over thirty got the vote, did the majority of the population have a vote, and only in 1928 were women and men put on a voting equality. In the supposedly democratic nineteenth century democracy was hated and feared. Jabez Bunting, leader of the Wesleyan Church in the first half of the nineteenth century put the matter quite simply: "Wesleyanism is as much opposed to democracy as it is to sin." Cobden, the Radical, wrote to Peel in 1846: "... are you afraid of the middle class? You must know them better than to suppose that they are given to extreme or violent measures. They are not democratic". Democracy, in the sense of an adult franchise rather than a

property franchise, is very new in Britain, and it was forced on a class parliament by the extra-parliamentary mass struggles of the Chartists, the Reformers who broke down Hyde Park railings in 1867, the Suffragettes, and the trade unionists in the strike waves of 1910 to 1926.

Just as democracy is new, so is the two-party system. Far from being hoary with tradition and antiquity, as we are still taught at school, the two-party system in Britain is modern and a direct growth out of the democratic struggles of the nineteenth and early twentieth century for the vote for all. This statement may seem startling to those who remember school lessons about Whigs and Tories, but it is the view of historians who have studied the history of the party system since Sir Lewis Namier first criticised the traditional view in 1929. It had, in fact, been challenged by Elie Halévy in 1923 in the introduction to his second volume of *A History of the English People*: "To all appearance for the past two centuries, the established and traditional government of Great Britain has been party government. Two parties, we are told, the Whigs and the Tories, the Liberals and the Conservatives, have opposed, yet respected each other, . . . assuredly England is pre-eminently the country of compromise and toleration. But when this has been fully granted, it remains true that the current account of party government is superficial and crude. How large an element of fiction and self-deception is contained in the accepted view!"

The fact is that before the enfranchisement of a section of the working class in 1867, a party, even remotely resembling a modern party, only existed for some eighty of the preceding two hundred years and a system of "ins" and "outs", played by two parties, only had some reality for twenty-seven years (1705-14) and (1830-47). Professor Robert Walcott has described the situation during the reign of William III, and his description might be applied to most of the eighteenth century and to the first half of the nineteenth: "The Whig or Tory majority in any particular division is made up of groups united only on that particular issue or for that session . . . party organisations must have been held together by more primitive methods, by simpler and more personal ties. To some extent membership in the same class or profession would serve; but the personal relations

between neighbours, or between the members of a family connection . . . these would furnish a more effective basis for a cohesive group. We suggest that many such groups, small, personal and family connections, did exist within the larger parties." What is more, Walcott rightly states: "The English House of Commons was divided, not into two parties, but into four major segments: Country, Whig, Tory, and Court. Each of these segments in turn was composed of groups of stalwarts together with various border-groups."

In this situation the ordinary M.P. conceived his duty as to oppose the executive; executive government obtained parliamentary support on a coalition basis. Parliamentary politics were far more like those of modern France, with its multi-party system than those of modern Britain. There was ceaseless manoeuvring between different political groups for office, for power and a share of the places and sinecures. This, not party politics, explains the continuous changes in eighteenth-century governments, the constantly changing personnel—though through the constant change a continuing core can be found, e.g. Walpole and the Pelhams. It was a form of government suited to a society in which few people had political influence. Such people took it for granted that they had a right and duty to govern the country, a tradition which is still deeply imbedded in the British ruling class and a source of their strength.

The Origin of Parties

How, then, did parties and a two-party system emerge? We need to distinguish carefully between the norm of faction fights within a united ruling class and those moments when the ruling class was divided about a fundamental matter such as the succession to the throne. It is only at such exceptional moments and when there appeared to be a real danger of social reaction, even if the appearance was false, that anything like a party system emerged. It is no accident that the Whig "party" was born in the late 1670's as the instrument of the revolutionary bourgeoisie to resist "Popery, France, and arbitrary power," i.e. feudal reaction. But the central leadership and the organisation of supporters in the country, which together make up a party, soon vanished. It is no accident that both Whig and Tory parties emerge as organised forces, playing a game of "ins" and "outs", just as Queen Anne's childlessness made possible a Stuart restoration and implicit in it a second threat from "Popery, France and arbitrary power." Once the threat, a rather insubstantial one, was over, parties disappeared again, until 1784.

In that year the ruling class once again united to form a political party. They faced the threat of

growing Radicalism at home (Wilkes 1768-9, and Paine) and had just experienced the shock of the American Revolution (1775-83); the French Revolution (1789) intensified the growing movement towards class unity behind a political party. In 1784 the younger Pitt began the creation of a more coherent political organisation than England had seen since 1714. He used the contemporary methods of family alliances, Crown management of electoral influence, bribery and the offer of places, and won over significant sections of the Whigs, notably Edmund Burke. Burke became the ideologist of this ministerial party, out of which the new Tory party grew, and it is in this connection that his debate with Paine over the French Revolution is so important. Unlike the products of earlier Whig family compacts and managed elections, Pitt's creation survived. With a single brief break on Pitt's death the Tory party ruled England from 1784 to 1830. A party emerged, but no two-party system.

It was only during the years 1830 to 1847, that there first appeared something like a modern two-party contest of "ins" and "outs". Reform and then the struggle to enforce the free trade economic policy of the industrial capitalists, were the main factors in this party struggle, which represented conflict between two sections of the capitalist class. With the effective triumph of the new middle class and the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, the two-party contest comes to an end and a ruling-class, once again united, faces the new working-class. It is in this period that the new Liberal party begins to emerge and to replace the Whigs.

The Liberals

It is no accident that mid-nineteenth century Liberalism has an ancestry in the old traditions of both Whigs and Tories. The word liberal seems to have come to England from Spain about 1816-20; its first connotation was Jacobin. In 1819 it was used to describe the radical reformers. But at the same time, within the Tory Government a section of opinion (Canning, Huskisson, Peel) are adopting some of Adam Smith's and Bentham's ideas. Walter Scott in 1826 described Canning and Huskisson as "a mitigated party of Liberaux". Peel, the Tory leader of 1834, issued an electoral policy statement, the Tamworth Manifesto, on which the Tory Quarterly Review commented: "When before did a Prime Minister think it expedient to announce to the people, not only his acceptance of office, but the principles, and even the details, of the measures which he intended to produce, and to solicit—not from Parliament, but from the people—that they would so far maintain the prerogative of the King as to give the ministers of his

choice not, indeed, an implicit confidence, but a fair trial."

Peel's new *democracy* had a clear purpose: "I presume the chief object of that party which is called Conservative . . . will be to resist Radicalism, to prevent the further encroachments of democratic influence which will be attempted." Once the industrial capitalist class had achieved power they did not find themselves in much disagreement with Peel's new Conservatism. It is not really surprising to find Cobden, the radical leader of the anti-Corn Law movement, appealing on the morrow of his victory for a union of the ruling class to be led by Peel, a union which, in fact, followed, though not under Peel's leadership. The years 1847 to 1867 saw once again a reversion to government by coalition of political factions and the cessation of any real two-party system. Cobden's letter to Peel is an appropriate comment on the reality of parties in the years before 1867: "Do you shrink from the post of governing through the *bona fide* representatives of the middle class? Look at the facts, and can the country be otherwise ruled at all? There must be an end of the juggle of parties, the mere representatives of traditions, and some man must of necessity rule the state through its governing class. The Reform Bill decreed it; the passing of the Corn Bill has realised it."

The Tory and Liberal parties originated, not as God-given instruments of some ideal two-party system, but as the practical political expression of the interests of two different sections of the capitalist class. Just as effective political power changed hands between 1832 and 1847, so the dominant party changed. There was no real two-party system, except during the period when power was passing from the hands of one section of the ruling class into those of another section. From 1784 to 1830 Pitt's Tories were effectively unchallenged; from the late 1840's to 1874 the Whig Liberals were almost continuously in office. In the mid-nineteenth century, as in the mid-eighteenth century, the unchallenged rule of a class led to the break-up of the party and the development of factional manoeuvring. Whig, Liberal or Tory *parties* matter little in the 1850's and 1860's; what is important is the personal following of Lord Palmerston or Lord John Russell.

A Modern Growth

The two-party system of modern Britain is, in fact, a modern growth, a development of the period in which industrial-competitive and then monopoly capitalism have triumphed. "It is widely believed that . . . the existence of two major political parties, capable of alternating in power, en-

sures that the Government is broadly representative of the nation." This plausible belief is connected with the ". . . widespread illusion among the British people that their electoral system is a model of democratic procedure".

How did these modern British political parties develop? In Britain from 1832 to today, the capitalist ruling class has constantly strengthened the state machine and tried to improve its efficiency, while attempting to conceal its real nature behind a propaganda barrage of myths. At the same time the working-class has constantly, if sometimes confusedly, sought more political power. This process has democratised the British political system—but a whole series of struggles have been necessary to achieve even the concessions wrested from the ruling class. Each concession has been accompanied by a safeguard. In 1885, one year after the extensions of the franchise, single-member constituencies replaced the previous two-member ones. In 1918 along with the extension of the franchise, the deposit system was introduced. One need not elaborate on the importance of these changes. James Harvey and Katherine Hood have made their significance quite clear in *The British State*: "The single-member constituency and the £150 deposit are not features of the electoral system which . . . have their roots deep in the past. The traditional British constituency returned two M.P.s from the beginnings of Parliament in the thirteenth century. . . . It is precisely during the period when the working class has gained the right to vote that the electoral system has been developed to the special advantage of the two main parties."

The two-party system has been forced on the capitalist ruling class by the growth of working-class power. It is the means they have reluctantly adopted to canalise the growth of working-class power and extra-Parliamentary political activity. This is the significance of the contemporary struggle in the Labour Party. The advance of the left does not represent a threat to democracy, but a threat to the system by which the working class are tamed and contained within the bounds of capitalist society. Professor Norman Gash has commented on the growth of the modern party in the nineteenth century in a somewhat confused way, but nevertheless one that makes clear the class role of the party system. In the 1830's and 1840's "three features of the political system were outstanding: the oligarchic tradition of government, fundamentally administrative in outlook; the party system moving slowly towards a programme as well as a philosophy of action; and the extreme forces of public opinion, often genuine, but also capable of being manipulated by men more adept and less scrupulous than the Parlia-

mentary leaders in the arts of mass propaganda. By the end of the century the party system was to emerge as the strongest of the three, having destroyed the aristocratic concept of 'the King's Government' on the one hand, and having made itself (at the cost of some concessions) the main channel of public opinion on the other."

The Clubs

How did this happen? The 1832 Reform Act for the first time introduced an electoral roll, a list of authorised voters. Each party sought to register its own supporters and disqualify opposition supporters. So the local professional political agent appeared—the Tadpoles and Tapers Disraeli the novelist lampooned, while Disraeli the politician was to rise to power on their shoulders. Around these local agents developed the first rudimentary local constituency organisations. Meanwhile, new national central machinery developed, typically for the age, around two London clubs—the Carlton and the Reform. The Carlton (1832) "was no mere new club established for the social meeting of gentlemen generally professing the same opinions, as White's or Brookes's—from the first it was a political association organised for party and Parliamentary purposes". "The Carlton was designed to be a point of union and the centre of organisation for the whole Party. . . . Its membership included not only the great bulk of the actual Parliamentary party, but all who counted for influence and activity among the recognised leaders of Conservatism in the provinces, in the diplomatic service, and in the fighting forces."

How far development was moving towards the modern tight conception of party organisation and discipline is revealed by the fact that when a second political club, the Conservative, was formed in 1840, it was immediately suspected of being a source of "serious schism in the Conservative ranks". The Carlton was "the hub of the Party election machinery . . . the centre of electoral information; the home of the Party election committees; the office of dispatch for the whips' correspondence; and the main collecting-point for the Party subscriptions. By means of its central position constituencies that were vacant and politicians that were unattached could be put in touch with each other." From the Carlton worked F. H. Bonham, the Conservatives' chief election manager, or Party agent, from 1832 to 1846.

It was not until 1836 that the Reform Club opened. It functioned much like the Carlton. However, until 1867 these developments remained rudimentary. Parliamentary politics did not much change—rather they reverted to the coalition system of the eighteenth century. Palmerston, who

dominated the politics of the 1850's and 1860's, did, however, appreciate the new element in politics. He first developed the art of using the press and public speeches to appeal to public opinion for support, if necessary against both the Queen and his fellow politicians. Democratic demagoguery in Britain almost begins with Palmerston and is only developed by Gladstone.

National Organisations

In the context of the 1867 Reform Act and the ruling class need, as Lowe put it, to educate our masters, the party machine developed apace. Nation-wide organisations with large memberships organised in local associations appeared alongside each of the older "parties". So the Liberal and Conservative parties proper were born. The new organisations first appeared in Birmingham, where the Reform Act had created three seats and given each voter two votes on the assumption that this would give fair representation to an electorate just over two-thirds Liberal and just under one-third Conservative. A Mr. W. Harris pointed out that if every Liberal voter could be visited and persuaded to cast his two votes in the proper way, three Liberals could be elected. Joseph Chamberlain and Schnadhorst, Secretary of the Liberal Association, took up the idea, and persuaded thousands of local supporters to enroll to canvass their fellow voters. The tactic was successful and a whole new pattern of Ward Associations, and local committees based on a mass membership, was born.

In 1877 a national conference of a hundred such local associations took place, and a new organisation, the National Federation of Liberal Associations, came into existence. The Conservatives followed up the idea—a National Union of Conservative and Constitutional Associations was created at the end of 1867 and, led by Sir Eldon Gorst from 1870, they, too, developed a mass membership. It was sometimes found difficult to bring together locally the old and the new Conservative supporters, so that strange abortion appeared in many parts of Britain, the Conservative Workmen's Association or Club, gathering together the dupes, but keeping them at a hygienic distance from their masters.

During the 1870's and 1880's an interesting struggle developed within each of the existing parties, between leaders thrown up by, or who used, the new machinery and the old parliamentary leaders. This is an important factor in the late-nineteenth-century political careers of Joseph Chamberlain and Lord Randolph Churchill. The end result of the struggle was quite simple. The parliamentary leaders acquired control of a new, apparently more democratic,

machine, by about 1886. Real modern political parties were in existence, and an electoral system began to be tailored to suit them. Sir Ivor Jennings wrote, in 1939, "the whole constitution, from the electoral process to parliamentary procedure, assumes the two-party system; and because it assumes that system it assists in maintaining it."

The Labour Party

The creation of the Labour Party in 1900 represented an attempt by the working-class movement to break through the shackles of this new two-party system. Through Ramsay MacDonald, the ruling class were able to frustrate the move and absorb the Labour Party, in Parliament at least, into the system. A study of how the Labour Party's Constitution was developed to give its parliamentary leaders some freedom from control by the mass organisations which had created the Parliamentary Labour Party is subject matter for a separate article. It is important to realise that the present constitutional struggle in the Labour Party is not a side issue, but central to the main political problem of our time—can the working class refashion the Labour Party to make it an effective instrument for the winning of Socialist power in Britain. To achieve this the present working of the two-party system has to be shattered. What is this system? Each of the two major parties today has a more or less self-perpetuating parliamentary leadership — it is chosen by the M.P.s, not by the party membership. This leadership controls the party H.Q. machine. The party H.Q. discipline the membership, by expulsion if necessary, and they select the candidates for election. Even so, the whole modern trend of development has been to reduce the powers and influence of the Commons, to elevate those of the Cabinet. The Opposition has been incorporated in the Constitution—its Leader is paid a special salary! The essence of the system has been expressed by R. T. McKenzie in his *British Political Parties*: "In the thirty years in which the Labour and Conservatives Parties have faced each other . . . the real gulf between them has never widened to the point where the parliamentary system threatened to become unworkable . . . neither great party at any point has threatened to disrupt the parliamentary system in order either to impose its own policies or to prevent its opponents from implementing theirs. The 'agreement on fundamentals' is today very nearly as great as it has ever been."

What are the fundamentals? The maintenance of an "impartial" civil service, police and armed forces and the limitation of economic and social changes to those which do not arouse too much

resistance from property owners. As the authors of *The British State* point out, education in Britain is still an excellent class indicator. While "70 per cent of the British population have left school at fifteen or earlier, yet out of 320 top level diplomats, generals, judges none left school at this age; 177 went to public schools and fifty-six more to private day schools. 100 per cent of Air Marshals investigated, 95 per cent of the top Foreign Office staff down to 63 per cent of the top Treasury staff were so educated, but only 1 per cent to 2 per cent of the total population." A State so staffed may be impartial in the faction fights of ruling-class cliques, but it will not be impartial as between the working class and the ruling class.

Communists today put forward, in their *British Road to Socialism* programme, the idea that by "using our traditional institutions and rights, we can transform Parliament into the effective instrument of the people's will, through which the major legislative measures of the change to socialism will be carried. Using the rights already won in the Labour movement's historic struggle for democracy, we can change capitalist democracy . . . into socialist democracy". In introducing the draft programme at our 25th Congress, George Matthews said: "One of the key organs of the state is Parliament. Therefore our programme first and foremost proposes the transformation of Parliament into an instrument of the will of the working people. This transformation of Parliament would then facilitate the transformation of other organs of state."

Parliamentary democracy

Socialists must learn to distinguish between parliamentary democracy and the two-party system. In fact a two-party system is an exceptional form of class rule even in capitalist society, existing only in the U.S.A., Britain and one or two Dominions; in the U.S.A. it has a quite different significance. The two-party system has existed for only a brief period of time in a very few countries. In most capitalist, as in most socialist, countries multi-party systems exist. In rejecting the idea that the two-party system is alone democratic, Communists in Britain do not advocate a one-party system. The *British Road to Socialism* is quite specific in its statement: "The Labour Party and the Communist Party, working together for their socialist aim, are the working-class political organisations on which the success of the change to socialism primarily depends. At the same time the right of other political parties to maintain their organisations, party publications

and propaganda, and to take part in elections, will be maintained provided that these parties conform to the law." At the 25th (Special) Congress, at which the matter was discussed, it was

emphasised that this means the legal right for non-socialist, as well as socialist, parties to continue in existence.

Discussion contribution

On How New is the "New Left"

Ralph Russell

ARNOLD KETTLE and *Marxism Today* deserve our thanks for his article in the October issue, "How New is the 'New Left'?" A serious assessment of the grouping and of our attitude towards it was long overdue, and Arnold Kettle has covered an important part of the ground. With most of what he says, I do not seriously disagree (though I question the usefulness of the tone which he sometimes adopts in saying it). But I believe that there are other important matters which, even in a first article, he should have touched upon, though a first article cannot, of course, hope to say all there is to be said. I want to make a few points about these omissions with regard to two main questions: (1) the analysis of the "New Left" and (2) our attitude towards it.

Arnold Kettle's answer to the question in his title is, in effect, "Not very"—and in the sense in which he has chosen to take the question he poses, he is, for the most part, quite right. But there is something new about it all the same, and something quite important enough to demand our serious study. The "New Left" established itself towards the end of 1956—nearly four years ago—and has continued ever since to be a politically significant trend among the intellectuals, and, in some cases, among the workers.

At that time our own advance amongst British intellectuals had, for years, been very slow, and the events of 1956 resulted in our losing a good deal of the ground we had won. Since then, our slow advance has again been renewed, and I don't doubt that, despite all difficulties, it will continue

and will gather a certain momentum. During the same period the "New Left" has gained substantially more than we have, and while we all know that part of this gain was made directly at our expense, in that many intellectuals left the Party in order to form the "New Left", it is also clear that a lot of their strength came from the fact that they at once succeeded in attracting sections whom neither we nor any other left grouping had ever been able to draw into discussion and activity. I should have thought that Arnold Kettle might have asked himself why—why *in this period*?

One of the best parts of his article is that in which he examines why it is that petty-bourgeois ideas have, in twentieth-century Britain, an importance "quite disproportionate to the actual . . . importance of the petty-bourgeoisie as a class." But as he himself shows, this analysis has been valid for many, many years.

Why *since* 1956, and *only* since 1956, has it been possible for a grouping like the "New Left" to establish itself as a considerable political force among British intellectuals, winning support which we have not been able to win, and maintaining for four years viable and increasingly well-produced periodicals—at first the *New Reasoner* and *Universities and Left Review*, and latterly the *New Left Review* formed by a merger of the two? The establishment of a viable grouping of this kind *is* a new phenomenon, and to that extent the "New Left" *is* a New Left, without quotation marks. How could it happen? This was the key question to which Arnold Kettle should have attempted an answer, or at least a partial answer. Or,

if he felt unable to do that, he should at least have posed this as the key question about the "New Left" to which an answer must be sought. But his article does not pose it at all.

To attempt anything like a comprehensive answer would require as much space as the original article. I want to make only a few points.

British Intellectuals Since 1956

In my opinion, the "New Left" owes its support among the intellectuals to two things. The first is that it has many of the qualities which progressive intellectuals admire in us Communists; and secondly, because it objects vocally to those features of our theory and practice which most progressive intellectuals dislike—especially to our concepts of Party discipline and of internationalism. It has gained support in these last four years because it was the first grouping to combine these two features. Before the "New Left" came into existence, the progressive intellectual looking for a left movement with which he could identify himself, had to choose between us and the left Labour Party groupings—and he didn't much like either. He didn't like us for the reasons just stated, despite his admiration for many of our current policies and for our courage and integrity. He didn't like the left Labour Party groupings because they were too preoccupied with the internal politics of the Labour Party; they were often prepared to indulge in, or to condone, all sorts of dubious practices in order to avoid excommunication by the dominant right-wing Labour leadership; and they tended repeatedly to deceive themselves and their supporters into believing that that leadership had turned over a new leaf. (*Tribune* has, of course, been the prize example of this.)

But after 1956 the progressive intellectual had a third choice which suited him much better, and this was the "New Left". Like us, the "New Left" hated what has come to be called "the Establishment". Like us, it regarded the right-wing Labour leadership as part of that establishment. Like us, it believed it was necessary openly to advocate radical socialist policies, even though groups formed to do so were unlikely, in present circumstances, to be accommodated within the fold of the Labour Party. And like us, it rejected the strong element of opportunism in the Labour Party left. (I suppose it was these things that Arnold Kettle had in mind when he said in his speech to the London meeting of October 7th, that the "New Left" was "in some ways close to us".) All these things the progressive intellectual liked, and to his great satisfaction he found that the "New Left" stood for them without at the same time standing for other things which he deeply disliked. It was

this situation which gave the "New Left" its following.

Our Attitude Towards the "New Left"

On the question of our attitude towards the "New Left", Arnold Kettle confines himself, in all but one sentence, to the present, and in relation to the present I most heartily agree with what he says. But I think he should have dealt also with something of the history of our attitude towards it. This was the more necessary because the attitude which he advocates now, means an important change from our past position, and when such changes are made, it is important to discuss the reasons for them. The one sentence in which Arnold Kettle refers to our past attitude is, to put it mildly, not very frank. "The Communist Party," he writes, "has not spent its time attacking the 'New Left', nor does it propose to begin now." The statement is literally true; but the context suggests that we did not attack the "New Left" because we felt a substantial measure of sympathy with it. The truth is exactly the opposite. The reason why we did not attack it was that we wanted to prevent it establishing itself, and we thought that we stood a better chance of achieving this if we ignored it, than if we attacked it. The "New Left" knows this as well as we do. It will naturally want to know what lies behind our present change of attitude, and I think Arnold Kettle's article should have told them what lies behind it. Let me stress that I am not asking Arnold Kettle to say what I would like to hear him say, and still less am I asking him to say what the "New Left" would like to hear him say. But I do want to know what *he* thinks, and I am sure that, whatever his conclusions are, progressive intellectuals will respect him the more for stating them frankly. Meanwhile, in the hope that it will lead to fruitful discussion of the issues involved, I will outline my own views.

When we were confronted with the fact of the emergence of the "New Left", what should our attitude towards it have been?

In general terms, the question can be answered quite simply. Our attitude should have been the same as it is to every other progressive or partially progressive movement—that is, we should have stressed what was common ground between us and should have taken the initiative in seeking to develop common activity in relation to it; at the same time, where we disagreed, we should have expressed our views plainly and forthrightly, but without either bitterness or condescension. Finally, we should have made it clear that the relationship we proposed was an equal one, in which we recognised that they had the same rights as we claimed for ourselves. In theory this has always been our

attitude towards other progressive groupings, at any rate since the thirties, though, in my view, our practice has always fallen, and still does fall, lamentably short of it. But in relation to the "New Left" we have not, until recent months, adopted this attitude even in theory. Why?

When the "New Left" was in the process of consolidating itself, the prevailing estimate in the Party was that its one essential political aim was anti-communist—the disruption and weakening of our Party—and that even if this were not the conscious aim, objectively this was its only significant role. It is now clear that even if this estimate was once correct (and I don't believe that it was) it is no longer so. But even if it were correct, that would be no argument against the kind of approach I have outlined. If we had, from the outset, stressed what we had in common with the "New Left" and declared all the time our own readiness to work with its members for the achievement of common aims, this would have done more than anything else could to frustrate attempts at disruption. This was the kind of attitude which the French Communists took up some years ago when the French Socialists led their supporters out of the united French T.U.C. (the C.G.T.) to form their own breakaway unions, the Force Ouvrière. The socialist move had no other aim but disruption, but the communist-led C.G.T. responded immediately with the offer of co-operation for common aims, and this attitude undoubtedly helped to counter the socialist leaders' disruptive efforts. Why couldn't we have adopted the same sort of stand towards the "New Left"? True, the two situations are not parallel in more than this respect. The French example is from the industrial field, where it has always been our policy to unite with trade union organisations of every kind. But I feel that there is an analogy in principle all the same.

I think that our whole activity as a party for many years past, shows that, while we want unity, we generally assume that it is impossible to unite with people who insist on attacking us publicly for the things they don't like about us. But why should this make unity impossible? We don't act on this assumption when really big issues are involved. Nasser is viciously and vocally anti-communist, but this, very rightly, does not prevent the communist states giving him material and moral support whenever his actions contribute towards the fight against imperialism; and Communists everywhere, including the Egyptian Communists whom Nasser imprisons, tortures and kills, adopt the same attitude. Of course, I am not suggesting that there is a close parallel in all respects between Nasser and the British "New Left". The British "New Left" is not such an important force in the

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anti-imperialist fight as Nasser is; and, on the other side, I do not suggest that any of the "New Left" want to torture us Communists! No, I am simply arguing by this example, that co-operation with vocal anti-communists is both possible and desirable on issues where we share common ground with them. The same *principle* holds good for all our work, in small things as in large.

Another attitude which often prevents us from taking a correct political stand, and which without the slightest doubt has deeply influenced our treatment of the "New Left", is our feelings about ex-Communists who attack us.

The leading figures in the "New Left" include many who were Party members until 1956-7. We who remain convinced of the indispensable role of the Party and see loyalty to socialist principles as necessarily involving Party membership, are naturally enough inclined to see people who leave the Party as traitors and renegades, and to treat them accordingly. Such an attitude is natural and understandable; in so far as it reflects a deep, passionate loyalty it is admirable; but as a basis for political judgment it is far from adequate. Our attitude towards ex-Communists should, as always, be determined by politics—that is, by an estimate of their political role. It is worth noting in passing

that there are hundreds of thousands of people in Britain who have, at some time, been members of the Communist Party, and their proportion is probably nowhere higher than in the generation of intellectuals to which both Arnold Kettle and I belong. The great majority are not the kind of people you call renegades; in other words, they have not betrayed the Party and gone over to the other side, but have, in varying degrees, fallen back from the more advanced position they occupied when they were in our ranks. In general, the ex-Communists in the "New Left" are in this category—and I do not exclude those who are fiercely critical of what they call Stalinism. Most progressive intellectuals are critical of "Stalinism", but they *are* progressive intellectuals all the same.

I hope that Arnold Kettle or some other member of the E.C. will think it worth while to take up these points, which are made in a positive spirit with the aim of improving the effectiveness of our communist work. Meanwhile, all of us whose Party work lies mainly among intellectuals will greatly welcome the lead which his article now gives, and will try to increase our participation "in discussions . . . helpful in promoting unity and activity", and to work harder for "the development of unity in action on all those issues on which we find ourselves in agreement with other sections of the left".

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